



Thomas foke

THE LIFE
OF THE
REV. THOMAS COKE, D.C.L.

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WITH A PORTRAIT.

*"Præbes vires in infesto Laboranti praelio,
Nec quietem post certamen Deneges emerito;
Teque merear potiri Sine fine præmio."*
AUGUSTINUS.

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PREFACE.

THE example of a life like that delineated on the following pages is too precious to be allowed to fade into oblivion; and, in recalling attention to it in this new narrative, the curators of the Methodist press believe that they are fulfilling a duty to the church and to the world.

It is true the present volume is not the first or only biography of Doctor Coke. A servant of God so distinguished would not need, in an age like ours, a heart or a hand to record his virtues; but it is believed that this last essay will be found more complete than its predecessors, and will be on that account not unwelcome even to those who have already learned to understand and revere his character.

The first attempt at a biography of Dr. Coke was made by the Rev. Jonathan Crowther, sen., in a volume in which, amidst a large amount of useful information on ecclesiastical and missionary subjects, there is too little found about the personal subject of the memoir itself to give satisfaction to the reader. This book was followed by a short but elegant sketch from the pen of the Rev. Joseph Sutcliffe, M.A., which is prefixed to a volume of

the Doctor's works ; and will always be read with pleasure and profit by the few who may meet with it. But a more authentic life of the great missionary was undertaken, at the request of his executors, by the late Samuel Drew, M.A., a man every way qualified for the task, not only by his own eminent abilities, but by those habits of intercourse with Dr. Coke himself which had given him an intimate acquaintance with his "doctrine, manner of life, faith, purpose, and charity." Yet even the respectable production of Mr. Drew, which has now been long years out of print, has defects and blemishes which, were a new edition of it contemplated, it would be desirable to repair. The writer of the present pages has had the advantage of Mr. Drew, and of each of the former biographers, in having access to documentary and other means of information to them unattainable or unknown ; and the volume is humbly offered to the Christian public with the confidence that, though the manner of execution be imperfect enough, the materials unfolded will not be found unworthy their regard.

In the department of religious biography we may certainly claim for Methodist literature a very high consideration. The Magazine alone has chronicled, for a century of years, a multitude of memorials illustrative of the power of religion to beautify our life, and turn death itself into gain ; while the more elaborate histories of the saints and evangelists of our communion have taken a standard and classic rank in the literature of the church at large. Such are, the Lives of the Wesleys and Whitefield ; the

sanctified Fletcher; the fervid Benson; the erudite Adam Clarke; Richard Watson, of lofty genius, but lowly, reverential piety; Robert Newton, eloquent as Apollos; and Jabez Bunting, the Aristides of modern Methodism.*

It is with these servants of the Most High God, who showed to millions the way of salvation, that Coke has taken his abiding place. The rank he holds among them will be determined by a survey of the actions of his life.

In looking heavenward toward constellations like these, one is reminded of the angel's word: "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." May He from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed, increase such men in all churches, till their line shall have gone out through all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world!

The author begs to express his grateful obligations to the friends who have favoured him with the use of manuscripts and books, of no small service in giving firmness to his work. To the Rev. Dr. Hoole, the Rev. Dr. Stevens of New-York, the Rev. John Mason, the Rev. Messrs. Maunder, John Harding, Isaac Gould, Alex-

* We could add many others: Henry Moore, Bramwell, Hare, Isaac, John Smith, David Stoner, William Dawson, Richard Treffry, and William Grimshaw; not to mention an engaging array of female excellence in the biographies of Mary Fletcher, Hester Ann Rogers, Agnes Bulmer, Darcy Maxwell, Mary Clarke, Elizabeth Mortimer, and other ladies who have adorned the church which cherishes a holy affection for their names.

ander M'Aulay, J. Gilchrist Wilson, M.A., and Thomas H. Squance, the companion of Dr. Coke on his last and fatal voyage; the Rev. William Toase of Boulogne-sur-mer, and the Rev. S. Romilly Hall; to Mrs. Richard Smith, Miss Tooth of Clapton, and Mrs. Thompson of Leamington, whose fathers were long-tried friends of the Doctor; to G. F. Urling, Esq., of London, and Thomas Percival Bunting, Esq., of Manchester; these acknowledgments are especially due.

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THOMAS COKE, D.C.L.

WE dedicate these pages to the memory of a man whose name has become a tradition of benevolence and peace;—a servant of the Most High, who through many years of a long life, in much labour, and with apostolic grace, showed to myriads the way of salvation; and whose grand ministry, in its sublime example, and far-reaching and imperishable effects, still speaks to passing generations. Doctor Coke was one of those men whose personal career forms an episode in the age in which they live, and gives a theme to history. They themselves vanish from the eyes of the living, and yet still live and move among us, in the permanence of their character, and the continual development of the purposes for which they existed. In telling how they lived and died, Biography concentrates great thoughts, inculcates great principles, pays a debt to the past, and sows for good harvests in futurity.

The annals of his life unfold characteristics which with greater or less vividness will awaken reminiscences of men who have won not fading Olympian wreaths, but crowns immortal. They will claim for Doctor Coke a place among

the heroes of mercy and justice who have led the van in the great conflict of humanity with ignorance and error, depravity and oppression :—a Wilberforce in deed and word, not in polished senates or courtly halls, but side by side with the lacerated and iron-bound children of slavery themselves ; a Xavier, with more legitimate aspirations and a purer faith ; an apostle, called by the grace of the Eternal Spirit, and endued with the “yearning pity for mankind,” the “burning charity,” which constrained Saint Paul to labour and suffer, in fulfilling in a life of toil, and a martyrdom of glory, the decree of Him who “will have all men to be saved.” And though our pages, through the incompetency of the writer for an undertaking so great, should fail in doing justice to the theme, yet the design itself, as it springs from veneration for his character, and a devout desire that its study may conduce to promote the ends for which he lived, will coincide, we are sure, with the feelings of the good, and be regarded with candour by all.

We shall have to recite how Divine Providence fitted him for the task to which it called him ; what toils he encountered in its accomplishment ; and under what impressive circumstances he finished his course, and entered on eternal repose.

THE LIFE
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BOOK I.
THE PREPARATION.

CHAPTER I.

FIRST YEARS.

OUR history opens in a beautiful and quiet scene, where, in South Wales, among towering hills, well-cultured plains, and overhanging woods, the waters of the Honddu and the Usk blend at the pleasant little town of Brecon; an ancient and sequestered neighbourhood, in which, with some few tokens of the spirit of modern progress, the traveller is more impressed with the relics of antiquity both feudal and monastic, in what yet stands of the baronial castle, and the mouldering cloisters of the Benedictine and Dominican priories,—those dead, mutilated effigies of the religion and learning of the past,—veiled with sylvan shrouds, in the woods that cast their solemn shadows in the transparent stream. From the junction of the Usk with the Honddu Brecon derives its primæval British name of Aberhonddi. The Honddu, a wild rapid rivulet, by confluence with the Usk swells into a goodly and majestic river. Altogether, Brecon is surpassed by few towns for the pic-

turesque. The ivy-mantled walls of the ruined chateau, the remains of the priory, a Benedictine cell to the abbey of Battle in Sussex, embosomed in luxuriant groves, and the mountain-scenery which stretches in the distance, throw over the landscape a romantic charm.

In the town-hall of this old ecclesiastical borough there might have been seen on many a day within the second and third quarters of the last century a grave sagacious man, dressed in the insignia of the bench, dispensing as chief magistrate the blessings of the law to such of the scanty population as were deemed to need them. This worthy alderman was Bartholomew Coke, the father of the future apostle of Methodism.* Bartholomew spent a life of seventy-two years in Brecon; at first in business as an apothecary, and, according to the usage of those days, a medical practitioner as well; and then, with a comfortable fortune from his family connexions and the gains of his profession, at the mellow evening of life, in the public service of his native town. He was a man of a serene disposition, and religiously moral; widely read in pharmacopœias, for the simples and compounds required for the diseases of the living frame, and full of wise saws and modern instances culled from Burn and Blackstone for the rectifying of such matters as were going wrong in the social body over which he seems to have exercised a sort of patriarchal care. His epitaph in the chancel of the Priory Church describes him as a gentleman "of a most amiable temper, beloved of all who knew him." It tells us that "his great benevolence, generosity, and hospitality could not be forgotten;" that "he filled the office of chief magistrate of the borough several times,† with universal approbation;" and that "his great medical knowledge was so well known in the county, that very rarely did any one under his care employ a physician."‡

Anne, the wife of this worthy man, was descended from a

* Note 1.

† Note 2.

‡ Note 3.

respectable family in the same county, of the name of Phillips. She has been described to me, by one who knew her, as a plain, motherly woman, well suited to promote the comfort of her husband. Their domestic life had been troubled by no care, nor afflicted with any other sorrow than that caused by the death of their two children, Bartholomew and John; a bereavement which overcast Mr. Coke's mind with the apprehension that their old age might be childless, and that when they should have passed away their house would be desolate, and their lineage extinct. But these gloomy presentiments cleared away at the birth of one more son, in whom they saw the pledge of hopes which shed a gladdening ray over the vista of the future. Him, in that spirit of sincere piety which seems to have actuated the whole conduct of this tranquil pair, they dedicated at an early age to the service of the altar of God. Mr. Coke lived to see his son in holy orders, both as a deacon and a priest. He died one year after the latter ordination in 1773. To Mrs. Coke it was granted to witness the development of the Divine purpose in the vocation of her son to a service and ministry which she could not have forecast, but with which the grace of God enabled her to concur in perfect harmony of mind and heart; since we find her in after-years, when her son had become identified with the glory and shame of "Methodism," taking a part with himself in the one and the other. After removing from Brecon she spent her latter days in London, a member of the Methodist Society, admired by them, and revered in life and in death.

Thomas, who was born on the ninth of October, one thousand seven hundred and forty-seven, grew up a dark-haired child, low indeed in stature, but bright and beautiful in aspect, vivid in temper, and, though not remarkable for precocity of genius, gifted with mental powers sufficiently strong to master without much trouble the requirements necessary to a liberal education. He passed through his scholastic training in "the college" at Brecon, one of those old "grammar-school" foundations which have greatly contributed to the perpetuity of

classical learning among us, and which, adapted to the advanced wants of modern education, should never be suffered to fall into decay. The endowment at Brecon had its original locality at Abergwilly, where, under the name of "the College of the Church of Christ," it had been founded in 1541 by Henry VIII., for the encouragement of "preaching and teaching, and good literature, and dedication of youth." It was afterwards transferred by Bishop Barlow to the town of Brecon, and gifted with the privilege of presenting young men for ordination without going to the university. At the time to which our narrative belongs, it was under the rectorship of the Rev. Mr. Griffiths, for whom Dr. Coke entertained an affectionate veneration all his life. Among his school-tellows was one who in after-years made some figure in the literary circles of the time, Walter Churchey,* who, together with Coke, became a friend of Mr. Wesley, and shared in the mercies of salvation in communion with the Methodists. Churchey was intended for the law; but Thomas Coke prosecuted the routine of juvenile study usual to boys who are preparing for the universities, till towards the close of his fifteenth year. We are not able to report anything extraordinary as to his scholastic attainments, or to hold him up as a wonder of genius. He could not affirm of himself, like the learned Bishop of Avranches, that "he had scarcely left his mother's breast, when the sight of a person reading a book would fill him with envious desire."† Nevertheless, Thomas loved his books well enough; and the ease with which we find him going through the curriculum at Oxford sufficiently shows that learning had found in the boy a willing votary, and that the advantages of the old grammar-school had not been misapplied.

* Note 4.

† Iluctiana, p. 3.

CHAPTER II.

THE UNIVERSITY.

THE decision which marked his parents' resolve about the destination of their son reveals itself in the circumstance that he had no sooner arrived at the age when matriculation is permitted by the statutes, than the scene of his education was transferred from Brecon to Oxford. His father took him thither in his sixteenth year, and at the Paschal term * he was duly entered a gentleman-commoner of Jesus College; a house that ever since its foundation in 1571, by Dr. Hugh Price, himself a native of Brecon, has been the favourite resort of students from the Principality. Nor has Jesus College failed to contribute its share to the honour of the university, in having given to the world such men as Bishop Lloyd, Archbishop Usher, Wynne, Bishop of St. Asaph, the antiquary Powel, Davies the lexicographer, the pious and eloquent Richard Lucas, D.D., and the learned theologians William Worthington, Henry Owen, and Dr. James Bandinell, the first Bampton lecturer. The principal of Jesus College, when Thomas matriculated, was Dr. Humphrey Owen.

Among those who were then passing through their undergraduate course at Oxford, there were not wanting men whose names now stand identified with the history of their country:—Jenkinson, afterward Earl of Liverpool; and Addington, who, as Lord Sidmouth, administered like him the highest trusts of the Government; with both of whom Dr. Coke was often brought into official intercourse. Scott, also, a young man of Methodist parentage, was then acquiring the first elements of that legal erudition which raised him to the

* Matriculated 11th of April, 1764. Note 5.

earldom of Eldon and the chancellorship of England; and William Jones at University College was already deep in those philologic studies which gave him rank with the greatest Oriental scholars of the age. At that time the university of Oxford was adorned by the presence of a number of persons distinguished as well by their high standing in literature, as by scholastic or ecclesiastical dignities. At Christchurch Dr. Bagot held the office of dean, which he exchanged for the bishopric of Bristol. Of the Jacksons, Cyril and Thomas, the former was Bagot's successor in the deanship, a man of lofty character;* and the latter, then a junior tutor in mathematics, afterwards became Bishop of Oxford. One of the Randolphs was devoted to the *literæ humaniores*, and for some years professor of poetry; the other, a stern theologian, who wielded in after-days with good effect the crozier of the metropolitan see. Newcome, whose critical works on the Prophets and the Gospel Harmony have given him a more enduring fame than even his subsequent elevation to the primacy of Ireland, was still a tutor of Hertford College. Horne, vice-chancellor of the university, and the future Bishop of Norwich, was meditating in the shades of Magdalen his Commentary on the Book of Psalms, with the recorded prayer that He who had the key of David would open to his soul, and to others through him, their treasures of truth and grace; and Kennicott, at Exeter College, surrounded with Oriental manuscripts, toiled day and night in preparing the great Variorum edition of the Hebrew Bible; while at Trinity the younger Wharton brought costly gifts to the shrine of Apollo in his prælections on the poetic art, and his admirable History of the poetry of England. Doctor Johnson, too, had not yet ceased to make his occasional visits to Oxford to groan over the memories of the dead, and to receive, when too late to make him happy, the well-earned homage of the living. "*Gigantes erant in terrâ in diebus illis; potentes in sæculo, viri famosi.*"

* Note 6.

Our young student from the quiet valley of the Usk found himself here in a new world, whose scenes and personages made impressions on his soul which no after-years could wear away. Few minds can be insensible to the solemn charms of this beautiful and venerable city. Its picturesque and imposing structures, combining the grandeur of palaces with the sanctified air of monastic tranquillity; its shrines of devotion, its sylvan retreats, its historic memories, its grand revelations of the supremacy of intellect and the claims of religion, altogether impart to this world-renowned metropolis of learning a majesty entirely its own. A youth of a temperament like his, with a heart that already beat with the stirrings of ambition, and an innate love of literature which prompted him in later life to make the generous sacrifices we shall have to record, would be powerfully moved to essay the career which spread itself before him, whose fulfilment would grace his name with the honours of learning, and endow him as an ecclesiastic with dignity and fortune.

“ When first the college-rolls receive his name,
The young enthusiast quits his ease for fame;
Resistless burns the fever of renown,
Caught from the strong contagion of the gown;
O’er Bodley’s dome his future labours spread,
And Bacon’s mansion trembles o’er his head :
Are these thy views? Proceed, adventurous youth,
And Virtue guard thee to the throne of Truth.” *

This last wish of the poet has a significance not without a bearing on the subject of our history. In the instance of many a young man who has commenced his university course with the noblest tendencies, vice, in the disguise of pleasure, has met him in the way, and destroyed by her unholy spells those hopeful yearnings after the beautiful and true, and changed the aspirant for whatever things are lovely and of good report into the wavering imbecile, or the reckless reprobate. To these insidious snares young Coke was not long in

* Johnson, *Vanity of Human Wishes*. Compare Juvenal, sat. x., 114, *et seq.*

becoming exposed. The public standard of morals in those days was lower than in our own, and the universities themselves were in lamentable keeping with the grossness of the times. Contrasted, indeed, with the frightful profligacy which disgraced the Continental seats of learning in the middle ages,* the morals of Oxford in the eighteenth century appear to great advantage; but, compared with those of the present day, they reveal a lowness of principle, and a scandalous disregard of the decencies of life, which rendered the time of a young man's residence there an ordeal of virtue through which few passed unscathed. Nor were things much changed for the better a quarter of a century later. Southey was an undergraduate at Balliol College in 1794; and, describing in one of his letters the life then led by the men around him, he mentions that "the college was in a flagitious state of morals."† "Temperance," says he, "is much wanted; the waters of Helicon are far too much polluted by the wine of Bacchus ever to produce any effect. With respect to its superiors, Oxford only exhibits waste of wigs and want of wisdom; with respect to undergraduates, every species of abandoned excess. As for me, I regard myself too much to run into the vice so common and destructive. I have not yet been drunk, nor mean to be so.....Never shall child of mine enter a public school or university. Perhaps I may not be able so well to instruct him in logic or languages, but I can at least preserve him from vice."‡ Let us add, however, that at the present day the improved tone of the public mind at large, and the judicious measures of the enlightened men who now administer its government, conduce to render the outward life of the university far less liable to reproach; while its

* The old Cardinal Jacobus de Vitriaco has left a fearful testimony:—"In una autem et eadem domo scholæ erant superius, prostibula ac inferius. In parte superiori magistri legebant; in inferiori meretrices officia turpitudinis exercebant. Ex una parte meretrices inter se cum lenonibus litigabant; ex alia parte disputantes et contentiose agentes clerici proclamabant."

† Life, vol. iv., p. 126.

‡ Ibid., vol. i., p. 177.

inward life, as we earnestly trust, is becoming more and more religious.

But to the temptations which beset his path Thomas Coke was soon in danger of falling a victim. The easy course of study at that time in vogue, and a relaxed economic discipline, left him ample time for amusement, and for too much beside. His standing in the university, as a gentleman-commoner, introduced him to the society of several young men of rank and fortune whose purses were better filled with money than their heads with wisdom, or their hearts with virtuous principle; and, under the influence of these bad associates, the pure and good feelings in which Thomas had been nurtured by his gentle mother, though never entirely extinguished in his bosom, were subjected to a debasing change. He was at first shocked and disgusted by the vices of his companions; but, where the most resolute opposition to its encroachments is not maintained, or, rather, where the power of temptation is not altogether shunned in avoiding the presence of the agencies by which it acts upon the mind, the love of guilty pleasure, like a swelling and defiant tide, will carry all before it. Yet, in the midst of this seductive dissipation, there was a Power present with him, "girding him, though he knew it not," which kept him from utter moral ruin. His heart, though unregenerate, was awakened again and again by the monitory voice of the Spirit who convinces of sin, and tells men of judgment to come. So, at the midnight revel, where, as he told a friend in after-years, he frequently witnessed scenes of depravity which were not to be described, his soul recoiled with abhorrence from the wickedness of his companions, and his will was endued with sufficient vigour to abstain from a literal participation in their crimes. It may be thought that even in these perilous trials his moral education was being carried on; but far wiser and infinitely more safe will be the conduct of the youth who in like circumstances shuns the danger altogether, with the vow of him whom Heaven ennobled as a prince with God and men: "My soul, come not

thou into their secret ; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united."

Yet, shrinking from these unveiled and ghastly apparitions of sin, he was nevertheless disposed to tamper with it when it came beneath the mask of conventional usage, or of pleasure indulged in by the many. Timorous of the sneers of the vicious, he tolerated vice itself ; or, in quest of gratification, sought it in the enervating drama, the fascination of the ball-room, and the unnatural spells of the gaming-table ; sought it, but found more frequently dissatisfaction and remorse.

Nor was corruption of morals the only evil which menaced him. There was another, and if possible a greater one, inasmuch as subjection to it would have completed his undoing by cutting him off from the only means of a sinner's return to peace. That other evil was corruption of principle in an apostasy from the faith of the Bible. They who descend within that lower depth leave hope behind. Some of Thomas Coke's associates had already thrown off not only the fear of God, but all belief in His word ; and these reprobate spirits, as if moved by the inspirations of the first apostate, were restless till they had involved him in their own ruin. Coke, who had hitherto been a stranger to all exercises of the mind about the truth of Christianity, content with a merely traditional and acquiescent belief, now found himself but ill prepared to repel attacks upon his creed, in objections and arguments which both surprised and silenced him. Discussion led but to defeat ; the mortification attending which was aggravated by sarcasm, or turned to the advantage of his opponents by the opportune persuasion to free himself from the trammels which they had succeeded in breaking, and rise to an equality with themselves in the true liberty of mind and manhood. Beguiled by such sophistry, or allured by deceptive glimpses of release from the restraints of moral obligation, and an investiture with the fancied license of the libertine, he unhappily forsook the guides of his youth, and threw off the covenant of his God. His steps in this fatal direction were at first uncertain and

faltering; but they gained strength as he advanced. It would appear, too, that this unhappy tendency was encouraged, or rendered more decisive, by the sanction of authority. From a quarter from which help should have been promptly rendered in this time of need, in counsel and orthodox instruction to an inexperienced youth thus wavering under the temptations of doubt, he received impressions which confirmed his bias to unbelief, and consigned him to the full mastery of error. We would fain hope that this may be disproved; but the statement made by one who in subsequent years was his intimate friend, and fellow-labourer in the service of God, stands unequivocally written,—that the subject of our memoir “was infected with infidel principles at the university, in which he was unhappily strengthened by his ungodly tutor.” *

They who call to mind the religious, or rather irreligious, state of Christendom at that time, will not regard such representations as at all incredible. Infidelity had become the fashion of the public mind. Its evil influences, like the apocalyptic smoke from the abyss, had ushered in an unnatural night upon the European world, compared with which the gloom of the so-called dark ages was sunshine. Faith was dying out from men’s hearts all over the Continent. Voltaire’s satanic gibes, the dismal rant of Jean Jacques Rousseau, Lessing’s astute scepticism, the God-denying blasphemies of Hölbach, and even the poetic rationalism of Herder,—and the effect of the example of kings and queens, the mass of the nobility, and the leaders of fashionable life, upon the multitude who did not read,—were all telling upon various orders of minds in bringing about the same disastrous consummation. The priest at the altar, the monarch on the throne, the doctor in the college chair, the dramatist on the stage, the wit in the *salon*, the soldier in the ranks, the trader in the shop, and the peasant at the plough, blasphemed God,

* Moore’s Life of Wesley, vol. ii., p. 308.

and renounced the hope of immortality. The truth, being withheld from the people by the infatuation of a Church which had long interdicted the Bible, could exert no antagonistic or repressive sway, while the rankest errors had free course, and the spreading plague held on its desolating way without an antidote.

In England, from the days of the second Charles, a succession of writers had attacked the authority of the Bible with an effective influence which largely augmented the progress of irreligion among all classes, till genuine Christianity was almost extinct. But the mercy of Heaven had revealed itself of late years in a revival of the apostolic faith, which, under the ministry of Wesley and his coadjutors, was diffusing, like a breath of God, a new religious life among large masses of the people; the renovating effects of which kept them steadfast to the interests of social order, when other nations were sinking in a chaos of anarchy and ruin. The university of Oxford, too, though insensible at the time to the value and importance of the evangetic movement which had originated in her own cloisters, had done good service to the cause of truth, in the labours of some of her divines in masterly defences of the outworks of Christianity, and so far deserved the gratitude of the church at large. But, in looking at the general character of the period now referred to, no wonder can be felt that here and there might be found a man among the tutors themselves unhappy enough to be infected with the far-spreading malady of unbelief, and base enough to communicate the venomous plague to his unsuspecting charge.

As an exemplification of the sceptical tone which prevailed even in England among the educated circles at that time, I will extract a short paragraph from the memoirs of one of Coke's contemporaries, the late Rev. Richard Polwhele, of Cornwall, who matriculated at Oxford shortly after Mr. Coke had left it. On his way from Truro to Oxford he stayed for some days at Bath, where, through a friend of his father's, Dr. Wilson, he was introduced to one of the literary

celebrities of the hour, Mrs. Macaulay. "I had frequent intercourse," says he, "with Mrs. Macaulay and her venerable friend Dr. Wilson, son of that good Bishop Wilson. In conversation, as well as in her writings, she had a command of language not equalled by the most eloquent of her sex : but, what I greatly regretted, she betrayed the sceptic while talking on religious subjects. One evening at tea, I well remember, I was greatly startled by her bold attack upon St. Paul," (of which he recites the ridiculous particulars,)—"very injudicious, certainly, in conversation with a boy, for such I was. I was surprised and irritated not only by her talk, but by Dr. Wilson's suffering her to go on unchecked ; indeed, he approved and applauded. From the impression made on my young mind, I recollect almost her very words." *

While temptation to unbelief had thus its agents many, he who in the distress of involuntary doubts looked round for an enlightened Christian friend to be his adviser and instructor in the time of need, had often to look in vain. One so situated writes in another memoir of the time : "I had the struggle to myself. I was alone. I knew no one who believed."

But with regard to Thomas Coke, though exposed to the assaults of temptation both in morals and principle, his better genius never forsook him ; or rather, let me say, the adorable Spirit, who strives so long with every sinner to convert him, withheld not His all-needed mercy :

" Still did He with his weakness stay,
Nor for a moment's space depart ;
Evil and danger turn'd away
And kept, till He renew'd, his heart."

Even before he left Oxford, a change for the better had come over his mind. In hours when surrounded only with levity and profaneness, the unseen Monitor spoke, and drew him away to reflection and repentant prayer. His mind was quickened with a desire for a life more worthy of his parents'

* Reminiscences, vol. ii., p. 105.

hopes, and of those solemn obligations under which he felt he existed towards the Judge of all. So, while his undergraduate course was passing rapidly away, he was stirred to apply himself not only to his lessons in Euclid, Aldrich, and the usual Greek and Latin classics, which comprise the inflexible requirements of the university, but to much thoughtful reading, *con amore*, in the works of some of our great divines who have devoted their labours to the demonstration of Christianity. He read and examined for himself, with a desire to know, strengthened by the anxieties which had been awakened in his soul. And these efforts in self-education unfolded and invigorated the powers of his intellect. Ideas which rose at length into an all-controlling sway over his future life began to disclose themselves to his solemn and hopeful gaze, while the shadows of error gradually broke away, and the veil was lifted from the face of Truth. Who can doubt that the combats with unbelief to which he had thus become exposed were permitted as an element in the preparation for the career which should open to him in futurity? About the realities of Divine revelation he doubted no more, in life or in death. The earnest zeal with which he grappled with infidelity whenever he saw or even suspected it in others, and the prominence he habitually gave to the evidences of the Gospel in his public ministry, show the force with which conviction was now beginning that goodly work in the inner man, the fruit of which is peace, and the effect quietness and assurance for ever.

From this time his residence at Oxford was spent in almost uninterrupted devotion to the purposes for which he had been sent thither. The life of a reading man at the university is too monotonous to admit of much detail. The early chapel-bells, the morning prayers, the lesson conned at breakfast, the class-room and tutor's lecture, the solitary constitutional walk, or companionable stroll among the sights of High-street or the shady walks of Christchurch, the commons dinner, the afternoon book, followed up by athletic exercise on the river,

the fields, or a country ride ; and at evening, when the oaken door is shut, and bolted too, for fear of interlopers, the ray of the lamp falling upon the tragic songs of *Æschylus*, or the simple but majestic narratives of *Thucydides*, or the moral and dialectic lessons of the *Stagirite*, and the night growing long in resolute but remunerative study,—all make one term much like another, and the eventful day arrives, when, after examination duly had, the honours of the baccalaureate crown and complete the circle of the years which, thus spent, are looked back upon by some men as the happiest of their life.

CHAPTER III.

OUTWARD ORDINATION.

ON concluding his studies at Oxford, by taking his Bachelor's degree on the 4th of February, 1768, Mr. Coke returned to Brecon. In the best circles of that respectable town, among which he had been always a favourite, he was now welcomed as an agreeable accession. His person, manners, station, and prospects gave him every advantage. In outward appearance, though low in stature, he had at that time of life great gracefulness of form, features beautifully regular, and lighted sometimes by a smile which seemed like a flash of sunshine, dark eyes radiant with vivacity, a brow white as alabaster, and overhung with masses of black hair, which descended in clustering curls on his shoulders.* With an exterior so pleasing, an education of the highest style, a competent fortune, kindly and agreeable dispositions, an aristocratic name, and respectability of station, we are not surprised that the gentry of the neighbourhood should have made him at home at their hearths, or that the municipality of the old borough should invite him to a seat in their councils. In fact, not long after his coming of age he was elected to the dignity of chief magistrate in Brecon; † the duties of which, as we are told, he discharged with ability and satisfaction. And I hesitate not to place this arrangement of circumstances as coming under the general head of his education for the life before him, inasmuch as the

* "*Ich preise Gott, der tag und nacht gemacht,
Der tag dein Antlitz, und dein haar die nacht.*"

† Note 7.

habits of attention to business which it formed, the contact into which it brought him with actual life, the forensic knowledge he would be obliged to acquire, and the facility in public speaking to be attained in the practice of the court, were all of service to the future man, and entered, under the Providence of God, into his preparation for the career for which he had been born.

On these remoter years of Dr. Coke's life our chapters must be the more brief, even were the authentic materials extant more numerous than they are, as we shall require all the space the present volume will afford to chronicle the massive labours which constituted his real ministry, and inscribed his name with an everlasting signature in the annals of the church. His connexion with secular affairs during those three years at Brecon, though it delayed, yet never altered, the purpose of entering into holy orders, which seems to have been entertained with the first thoughts of his youth; and, as one birthday followed another, his solicitude to carry this master-design into fulfilment became the more pressing. Shaping to himself such a destination, he did not keep out of sight the necessity of preparing for it; and, among the pursuits which occupied his passing days, the usual books which enter into the common routine of reading for orders in the Church of England were often in his hands. The sceptical doubts on the truth of Revelation, which like the evil birds that hovered over Abraham's sacrifice had at one time overshadowed his mind, had now for ever fled away; and, though all was not yet right in the heart, yet in the head he was clear enough in intellectual certainty that Christianity is a Divine dispensation. I might have mentioned that, while he was yet at college, a circumstance occurred which contributed to strengthen the impulses of his mind in searching for this precious truth. During one of the vacations he spent a few days in a visit to a clerical friend, a man of talent, and of some standing among the clergy of the Principality. No conversation had passed between them on religious subjects till the Sunday, when

Coke had the pleasure of hearing him deliver from the pulpit a discourse which greatly moved him, by the importance of the subject, the vivacity of the style, and the apparent heartiness which pervaded its delivery. As he listened, a glow of good feeling came over the young man's soul, which, on their return from church, he acknowledged to the preacher with expressions of gratitude, seizing the occasion, while his tongue found the liberty to do so, to describe to his friend the conflicts through which he was passing. Alas! the man who should hereupon have been prompt to give this erring spirit the counsel which it appealed for, listened to his ingenuous confessions with a sardonic smile, and, as if to relieve the inquietude of the student's mind, averred to him that of the doctrines he had been preaching that morning officially he himself believed nothing. Coke, awestruck at such a revelation of villany, saw at once that infidelity could obliterate even the sense of honour from a man's heart, and mentally resolved that he never would pause till he had found repose and safety in the knowledge of the truth. It was then, after his return to Oxford, that he applied himself, as we have said, to the pages of some of the great English defenders of the Christian faith; and, of them, he has made special mention of Bishop Sherlock, as an author to whose book, entitled, "The Trial of the Witnesses," he was wont to express an abiding sense of obligation.

This, too, was a part of his preparation for the work of an evangelist. He was to know in whom he had believed; and, while ready to give an answer concerning the hope that was in him, would be able from the recollections of the past to have more heartfelt compassion for the ignorant and the wanderer from the way, and a truer insight into the causes and the remedy of their unhappy state.

But as yet he himself, though "desiring to be a teacher of the law," knew but little about it. His judgment was convinced that the Gospel bore unclouded evidence of a Divine original, but he knew it not as the power of God to his own

salvation. His creed was that of the head, not yet of the heart. Only in that way could he hitherto say, "I believe in the remission of sins;" "I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life;"—not with the consciousness of pardon, or the comfort which the Divine Life-giver imparts to the soul. Nor does it appear that much before this period had he been aware either that such blessings are attainable, or that without them he could have no assurance of eternal life. Some light towards this discovery seems to have dawned on him while reading a small volume on Regeneration by Dr. Witherspoon, which gave him a general idea of the nature of that momentous change, and a persuasion of its necessity, but with no awakening impression or immediate result, except to tinge his feelings with greater seriousness in the prospect of the vows he was about to make at the altar of God.

To attain the object upon which he had now finally decided, Mr. Coke had three ways of procedure before him. He had the means of purchasing the next presentation to a benefice. But against this method his conscience revolted, as surreptitious, and as bordering closely upon simony, if not identically the same thing. In the next place, his public and official situation at Brecon had brought him into connexion with certain political men, on whose influence he might count for some kind of church-preferment. One of them, indeed, to whom he had rendered weighty help in securing a parliamentary election, had promised to obtain for him a prebendal stall in the cathedral of Worcester. Coke, however, had not sufficient faith in such promises to waste his years in waiting upon them. It remained for him to do as the greater number of his brethren had done,—to enter the Church by the most humble of her portals, and present himself for ordination with a simple title to a curacy. This he obtained at Road, in Somersetshire. He then went up to Oxford, where he passed his examination for deacon's orders, was ordained a deacon on the 10th of June, 1770, and three days afterwards proceeded

Master of Arts. He was examined for priest's orders * at Abergwilly, in the diocese of St. David's; and on the 23d of August, 1772, was ordained in the chapel of St. John within the palace of Abergwilly, by letters dimissory from the Bishop of Bath and Wells. But in kneeling at the prelate's feet to ratify those august vows, while he heard the solemn invocation,—

“Come, Holy Ghost, Creator, come,
Inspire these souls of Thine,
Till every heart which Thou hast made
Is fill'd with grace Divine :

“Thou art the Comforter, the gift
Of God, and fire of love,
The everlasting spring of joy,
And unction from above,”—

he felt that his soul did not possess that peace which the eternal Paraclete imparts to those whom He sanctifies for the ministry of Christ. On the contrary, he had approached this moment with a fluctuating and uneasy mind, arising partly from some glimpses of the awful nature of the office he was about to assume, a revelation of which had made apostles tremble, and had caused Chrysostom, as Sozomen informs us, to confess that on the day of his ordination his convictions of the responsibility coming upon him were so strong as well nigh to rend asunder the spirit from the body; and partly from the distressing consciousness that all was not right within him. He had but “the spirit of bondage unto fear.” He wanted filial confidence in a forgiving God. He was about to begin to preach a Saviour unknown. Here was the cause of the sombre feelings which oppressed his soul. He

* “My examination for deacon's orders in Oxford, and for priest's orders at Abergwilly, were both of them oral. I was examined both times in the Greek Testament, not in the grammatical department. At Oxford I translated a Latin article into English; at Abergwilly an English article into Latin; and at both places was asked some general questions in divinity.” See note 8.

wanted what Isaiah in the temple found, when the pain and fear excited by the inward revelation of his evil self were removed at the touch of the live fire from the altar, and the evangelism of the seraph,—“Thy iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.” “Then said I, Here am I; send me.” Compared with Mr. Coke’s state of mind, how different the calm decisive principle and triumphal faith of Whitefield at the same momentous hour!—“I trust I answered to every question from the bottom of my heart, and heartily prayed that God might say Amen. And when the bishop laid his hands upon my head, if my heart doth not deceive me, I offered up my whole spirit, soul, and body to the service of God’s sanctuary. Let come what will, life or death, depth or height, I shall henceforward live like one who this day, in the presence of men and angels, took the holy sacrament upon the profession of being inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon me that ministration. I can call heaven and earth to witness that, when the bishop laid his hand upon me, I gave myself up to be a martyr for Him who hung upon the cross. Known unto Him are all future events. I have thrown myself blindfold, and without reserve, into His almighty hands.” But then Whitefield could previously record how God had converted his soul, and revealed His Son in him:—“But O, with what joy, joy unspeakable, even joy full of glory, was my soul filled, when the weight of sin went off, and an abiding sense of the pardoning love of God, and the full assurance of faith, broke in upon my disconsolate soul! Surely it was the day of my espousals, a day to be had in everlasting remembrance.” Herbert, that sainted priest and poet, seems to have enjoyed the same assurances, when, telling of his own spiritual investiture for the evangetic office, he writes :

“Christ is my only head,
My alone only heart and breast,
My only music, striking me even dead;
That to the old man I may rest,
And be in Him new drest:

“So, he / in my head,
Perfect and light in my dear breast,
My doctrine tuned by Christ, who is not dead,
But lives in me, while I do rest :—
Come, people; Aaron’s drest.”

In the case of the subject of our memoir it was not yet thus. The Anglican priest was indeed complete in all the proportions of canonical propriety ; but, as with the finished statue of Prometheus, there wanted the sun-spark of celestial life. Nevertheless the God of all grace was making him ready in the day of His power. Though Mr. Coke had not yet attained these goodly blessings of the Christian life, the days were not distant when he too would lift up his eyes to them, and would gain them as well. Let it not be overlooked that he was even now profoundly sincere. He approached the sacred office in the fear of God, and with an humble desire to do good in his generation. His conduct shows it. In a worldly point of view, he was not moved by the lure of tithe-money. His patrimonial inheritance placed him above the need of doing the work of the priesthood for a morsel of bread ; and as to the ambitious aspirations of which he has been accused, in taking this step, with advantages like those he possessed he might certainly have found a path more promising for their gratification than that which led him to an humble curacy in Somersetshire. Nay, the very disquietude which alloyed his satisfaction on being admitted to the full orders of the priesthood was stirred within him by the warnings of mercy to arouse him to seek the things that are above ; and, together with the other circumstances of this epoch of his life, formed a part of his preparation for the true apostleship. Those uneasy feelings gave his case a hopefulness which would have been otherwise wanting. He knew, and soon knew more fully, that he was spiritually dark and destitute, in need of all things good, and was humbled before his God. Upon such a man the High and Holy One has promised to look with the compassion that revives and saves. Unto the upright, light. There is a quickening Spirit.

CHAPTER IV

CONVERSION.

“THE wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” Thus did Jesus, when at dead of night He preached the Gospel to Nicodemus at Jerusalem, stating the need and nature of the second birth, admonish him and us that the operation of the Divine Spirit who effects it may not be fully understood even by him who becomes conscious of the change itself. The Holy One, in making all things new in the world within us, employs a diversity of action in producing one result. All men’s minds are not constituted alike, have not the same degree of susceptibility, nor yield in each case to the power of the same motive. The Searcher of hearts deals with us in accordance with these endless variations; and, could the secret history of God’s regenerate people be unfolded to view, it would probably be apparent that no two cases of conversion were in all respects accomplished by precisely the same process. To some, the effectual call comes as with thunder and earthquake; to others, in the still small voice. With Luther it was in the first way. He had gone, after taking his Bachelor’s degree at Wittenberg, to embrace his father and mother in their lowly cottage near Mansfeld. He had been moved, by the tidings of the murder of a beloved fellow-student, to weigh the question,—If the assassin’s knife had reached his own heart, instead of that of his friend, where would his soul then have been; in heaven or in hell? and, as he was pondering these things while plodding across the Saxon hills on his way back to the university, the heavens

grew dark, and a storm of unusual violence broke upon him. "The thunder bursts and strikes close by his side. Luther throws himself on his knees. It may be his hour is come. Death, judgment, and eternity surround him by all their terrors, and speak to him with a voice which he can no longer resist. Wrapt in agony and the terror of death, as he himself expressed it, he makes a vow, if he is delivered from this danger, to abandon the world and to give himself entirely to God."* So, shortly after, he leaves the college, and proceeds alone, and in the dark, to the convent of the eremites of St. Augustine, and asks to be received. The gate opens and closes. But not by the works of righteousness prescribed by the rule of his Order could he find the inward peace he had come for. In the monk's dark narrow cell he learned more fearfully the dolorous mysteries of his own evil heart; the perilous guilt of sin grew more heavy upon his soul, with such intenseness that self-control at times forsook him, and one evening at vespers he interrupted the solemnities by his loud cry of anguish. Often, on returning to his cell, he would kneel all night in prayer; and on one occasion he was found stretched on the ground insensible from exhaustion. But He who had wounded knew how to heal. The acceptable saying, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, was applied with Divine power to his heart, through the good services of the vicar-general of the Augustinians, who had found for himself what he expressed when he told Luther that "the Son of God came hither for the pardon of our sins;" and was confirmed to him more fully by the conversations of an aged man of the same Order, who explained to him the way of faith more fully. The simple words of the Creed, which Luther had repeated from a child without feeling their import, came from the lips of the old monk with an effect that turned darkness into light, "I believe in the remission of sins." "Now the thing," added he, "that thou art to believe

* D'Aubigné, vol. i., p. 116.

is, not merely that David's or Peter's sins are forgiven, but that thine are forgiven : * for, as St. Bernard shows in his sermon on the Annunciation, the witness which the Holy Spirit witnesseth with our spirit is, 'Thy sins are forgiven.'" The day then broke in Luther's soul, and the Reformation dawned on Christendom.

So, in the case of one of the men who heralded the still spreading reformation of the eighteenth century, Whitefield, conviction of sin was attended by long and indescribable distress. He was in his undergraduate days at Oxford when these awakenings came upon him. "He was overwhelmed with morbid horrors, and describes himself as losing at times even the power of thinking. His memory failed; his feelings were cramped, he says, as a man bound in iron bands; he chose the poorest food and the meanest clothing, and by dirty shoes, patched raiment, and coarse gloves, endeavoured to mortify his burdened spirit. He was insulted by his fellow-students, and those who employed his services discharged him for his self-negligence. He daily underwent some contempt. Dirt was thrown at him in the streets. Whenever he knelt down to pray, he felt great pressure both in soul and body, and often prayed under the weight of it, till the sweat dripped from his face. 'God only knows,' he writes, 'how many nights I have lain groaning. Whole days and weeks have I spent prostrate on the ground in silent or vocal prayer.'"† During the forty days of Lent he took nothing but "coarse bread and sage-tea," except on Saturdays and Sundays. He prayed under the trees at night, trembling with the cold, till the college-bell called him to his dormitory, where he often spent in tears and supplications the hours which should have brought him the relief of sleep. His health sunk under these rigours; but he writes that, notwithstanding his sickness continued six or seven weeks, he should have reason to bless God for it through the ages of eternity; for, about the end of the

* Not strictly correct. The penitent sinner is to believe on Christ *for* forgiveness.

† Philip's Life of Whitefield.

seventh week, after having undergone inexpressible trials by day and night under the Spirit of bondage, God was pleased to remove the heavy load, to enable him to lay hold of the cross by a living faith, and by giving him the Spirit of adoption to seal him unto the day of everlasting redemption.*

When Mr. Wesley, in the same stage of his personal history, was seeking for the knowledge of salvation through the remission of sins, it does not appear that his mind encountered those tempests of terrible emotion which have laid other men prostrate in body and soul. He had an inward sense of wrongness before God which filled him with concern and anxiety, deepening every day into a more solemn despair of saving himself by works of righteousness that he had done, or was trying to do.† He was shut up to the faith demanded by the Gospel, and was at length enabled, by the inspiration and effectual grace of the Holy Spirit, with that faith to believe. The 24th of May, 1738, was the day of this, his “second best nativity;” and of it, with a pen dipt in the fountain of everlasting gratitude, he has left this register:—“I think it was about five this morning that I opened my Testament on those words, ‘There are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, even that ye should be partakers of the Divine nature.’ (2 Peter i. 4.) Just as I went out, I opened it again on those words, ‘Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.’ In the afternoon I was asked to go to St. Paul’s. The anthem was, ‘Out of the deep have I called unto Thee, O Lord : Lord, hear my voice. O let Thine ears consider well the voice of my complaint. If Thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O

* Stevens’s History of Methodism.

† “I see that the Law of God is holy, just, and good. I know every thought and temper of my soul ought to bear God’s superscription. But I am sold under sin. My mouth is stopped. God is holy, I am unholy. He is a consuming fire; I a sinner meet to be consumed. But I hear a voice, (and is it not the voice of God?) saying, Believe and thou shalt be saved. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Lord, who may abide it? For there is mercy with Thee ; therefore shalt Thou be feared. O Israel, trust in the Lord : for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his sins.'

"In the evening I went very unwillingly to a Society in Aldersgate-street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation : and an assurance was given me, that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death." Thus began that experience of the power of religion, which, as Watson observes, "nurtured by habitual prayer, and deepened by unwearied exertion in the cause of his Saviour, settled into that steadfast faith and solid peace which the grace of God perfected in him to the close of his long and active life."

We could fill the present volume with similar recitals, all tending to one conclusion ; namely, that in the merciful work of conversion the Spirit of God in various ways, and with various degrees of concern and distress, convinces the sinner of his absolute need of a Saviour, and then enables him to believe with a faith which makes that Saviour all his own. It is at the cross that the repentant soul finds rest. When Herbert received the witness of the Spirit, he was lying prostrate on the ground before the Lord's table in Bemerton church. That is the frame of mind, though not of necessity with the same outward circumstances, in which we may all obtain it. At the Divine propitiatory, in presence of the Atoning One, the forgiving God reveals Himself to revive the spirit of the contrite.

" Well pleasing to the Lord above,
Christ's sacrifice of life and love,
I plead before the gracious throne ;

Father, a prodigal receive,
And bid a pardon'd rebel live,
The purchase of Thy bleeding Son."

Let us see how the experience of the man whose career we are retracing corroborates the same precious lesson. He had removed to his new sphere of professional labour at South-Petherton, a parish of Somersetshire, in the diocese of Bath and Wells. Brought face to face with a numerous and important congregation, a serious feeling of responsibility came over his soul. They were looking to him to show them the way to be saved: did he know the way himself? Painful misgiving! But at all risks he would seek to know. Meanwhile, distrustful of his own resources, in composing his sermons for the pulpit he feels it right to make up for the meagerness of his own thoughts, by appropriating either in whole or in part such discourses of our best English homilists as appeared to him the most decisive in the tone with which they made known the truth. But, while engaged in these commendable studies, his own mind became more vividly pervaded with serious thought. The impressions he had received in reading Witherspoon's treatise on Regeneration revived within him; and that soul-stirring book, the "Alarm to the Unconverted," by Alleine, which about this time fell into his hands, made them deeper and stronger.

"Wilful ignorance kills men's souls in the dark: it doth butcher in secret, and lead blindfold to the block. Beware this be not your case. If you spare that sin, know that it will not spare you. There is a murderer in your bosom.

"Formality. Many trust in the outside of religion, in the external performance of holy duties; and this oftentimes doth most effectually deceive them, more effectually undo them than open looseness. They fast, they pray, they give alms, and therefore will not believe but that their case is good. Whereas, resting in the work done, and coming short of the inward power of religion, they fall at last into the burning lake from the confident persuasion of their being in the ready

way to heaven. Dreadful! when a man's religion shall only serve to harden him, and effectually to deceive his soul..... When men trust in their own righteousness, they reject Christ's. Beloved, you have need to watch; for not only your sins, but your duties may undo you."

"Beloved, be not your own betrayer; deceive not your own heart, nor set your hand to your own ruin by a wilful blinding. Set up a tribunal in your own heart; bring the word and conscience together: O, follow the search till you have found how the case stands. Mistake here, and perish. O Searcher of hearts! put Thou this soul upon, and help him in, his search!"

These, and like appeals, which speak from almost every page of the book, not only showed him more clearly the nature of conversion, but aroused him to seek it. When he first came to the curacy, he had found a certain pious satisfaction at his private devotions in the use of a manual of prayers by Archbishop Tillotson; but he now began to pray without a book, and from a heart becoming alive with solitudes which struggled to give themselves expression. Just then there was given another token of the concurrent providence and grace of God leading this soul into the way of peace, in affording him a living guide. Such has been the order of His providence in the greater number of instances of conversion upon record. Of Saul, at Damascus, it was said, "Behold, he prayeth," and Ananias, an old disciple, was thereupon sent to tell him of a Saviour. The Ethiopian in the desert reads Isaiah the prophet, but understands not, till Philip an evangelist comes and preaches to him Jesus. So Wesley derived essential aid from the evangelic counsels of the Moravian Böhler. And now it was that Mr. Coke, in his struggles after the liberty of the Gospel, had the privilege of converse with one who for years had enjoyed it in its fulness. This man of God was the Rev. Thomas Maxfield, who has the honour of having been the first of the lay ministry of early Methodism, but who had now for some time

been in orders as a clergyman of the Established Church. He had been ordained by the Bishop of Londonderry, not only for the sake of giving a man of ardent zeal and extraordinary talent a defined *status* in the Church, but more especially as a mark of the prelate's great esteem for the Founder of Methodism. "Remember," said he, "I ordain you as a helper of Mr. Wesley, that that good man may not work himself to death." For several years this object was fulfilled; but Mr. Maxfield, who was a person of fervid temperament, permitted himself to be carried into fanatical excesses which threatened to compromise the cause of Methodism in London, and ultimately led to his retirement from the Society, and the establishment of another congregation, of which he was for a considerable time the minister. The unpleasant feelings with which this step was accompanied gradually passed away, and between Mr. Maxfield and the Methodist preachers and people there was a long reciprocity of Christian friendship. In the order of Divine Providence, this good man at the period I write of was spending some time in the neighbourhood of South-Petherton. Mr. Coke's awakened state of mind had already given a new tone to his public ministrations; and reports of this change, so pleasing to some, but disagreeable to others, reaching Mr. Maxfield's ear, he felt a strong desire to seek his acquaintance. They were introduced to each other, and a friendship began which was destined never to end. Their intercourse soon led to the most hallowed results. The curate of Petherton had found such a man as he had begun strongly to wish to know; a man who, himself made free from sin, had become the servant of righteousness, having his fruit unto holiness, with eternal life before him. Teachable and ingenuous, he profited by every interview, while Mr. Maxfield in successive conversations unfolded to the more than willing listener the true nature of conversion, the primary cause of the pardon of sin in the glorious work of redemption by the Incarnate God, the effectual cause of our renewal in the presence and grace of

the adorable Spirit, the freeness and fulness of salvation by Christ, and the Divine evidence of our acceptance with a reconciled God in the internal witness of the Comforter.* Under these apostolic teachings, Mr. Coke was set free from a labyrinth of doubts and misconceptions. His previous anxieties had prepared him to welcome such glad tidings, and to receive with meekness the engrafted word which was able to save his soul. The day had dawned, and the day-star appeared in his heart; nor was it long before the sun arose upon him with healing beams. Of generous and susceptible dispositions, simple in heart, and characteristically set upon obeying without fear the known dictates of truth, he was already not far from the kingdom of God. "Show me the right way, and I will walk in it." Such was the young man, and his vow; and He of whom it is said, "The meek will He guide in judgment," now led him into the land of uprightness. The redeeming work of Jesus Christ makes the space between a truly penitent sinner and a reconciled God a single step: that step Mr. Coke was now enabled to take. When Mr. Wesley, in his early clerical life, was seeking the knowledge of salvation through the remission of sins, he was tempted to desist from preaching any more till he had found it in the witness of the Spirit; but was induced to persevere in his pulpit-labours by the counsel of a holy man, who said to him, "Preach it till you have found, and afterward you will preach it because you have found." So it was with Mr. Coke. As he received the truth, he made it known to his people; and under the constrainings of convictions which gathered strength in his soul with every day, no longer content with the canonical duty of the Sunday at church, he gathered the rustic people together in unfrequented parts of the parish, and preached to them, in cottage-services, "the words of this life."

* "Is there need that I show you how this confidence is the operation of the Holy Spirit? Were He not within you, there could be nothing of the kind. It is by Him that we cry, My Father, my Father."—St. Bernard, Sermon on Pentecost.

One evening, while proceeding to the appointed place for a lecture of this kind, musing on the engrossing theme, his mind was greatly drawn out in prayer for the assurance of that pardoning love for whose voice he so intently listened. That same night his prayer was answered. While engaged in the work of the evangelist among the people, he found the Gospel to become to his own soul the power of God unto salvation. The word was nigh him, in his mouth, and in his heart; he knew in whom he believed; he felt his soul overshadowed by the Infinite Mercy, and that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus had made him free from the law of sin and death. Ravished with a joy unspeakable, he could now freely and fully dedicate himself to God. Old things passed away; the whole world within him had become new. His entire subsequent history was the demonstration of the blessed change. He lived now, yet not he, but Christ lived in him. Henceforth existence itself was sacred; his full life a votive offering, a holy sacrifice, a priestly service, a perpetual worship, a prolonged HOSANNA RABBA; at once a homily of faith and hope, a solemn litany of prayer, a hymn of endless adoration. *Magnificat Dominum anima mea.*

CHAPTER V.

THE HEAVENLY CALL: FIRST TRIALS OF FIDELITY.

THE vocation to the holy ministry is both outward and interior: outward, in the voice of the church; inward, in the voice Divine. Mr. Coke had been invested with the external power to minister at the altar by the ordination of his bishop; but now, along with the revelation of the Son of God in his heart, came the inner vocation of the Holy Spirit, which it was hereafter the hallowed task of his life to obey. He who called Saul of Tarsus to the apostolate now spoke, in effect, the same words to one whom He would prepare to be His messenger to them who were nigh, and to them who were afar off: "Rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared to thee to make thee a minister and witness both of these things that thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I now send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me." But the process of preparation for this glorious career, though effectually begun, was not yet complete. He must first make proof of his ministry, and learn to endure hardness as a good soldier of the Cross.

With the renewal of the heart, his intellectual powers received a refreshment and invigoration which seemed to render the work of the ministry a new thing. Liberty, vitality, and power, hitherto unknown, relieved the exercise of thinking and the utterances of thought from the trammels of embarrassment, and endowed him with growing measures

of ability to use great plainness of speech. Within the last two years, while the spiritual nature within him was gradually clearing up, and

“Light on light, and ray on ray,
Successive, brighten’d into day,”

he had made repeated alterations in his manuscript sermons, interlining here, and interleaving there; but now these old forms became obsolete, and he felt that he had outlived them. The heavenly forces which moved soul and heart struggled for expression in a style answering to their ample and expansive tendencies. In a word, the new wine had burst the old bottles, and Mr. Coke became an extempore preacher of the Gospel. The true source of apostolic power in preaching was unfolding itself to him and in him. With a calm, steadfast faith, he uplifted his gaze to the seven lamps of fire which Saint John in the Apocalypse saw burning before the throne, even the seven spirits of God which are sent forth into all the earth; and in their light he saw light, and from their uncreated flames he derived an inspiration which rendered him a minister of the Spirit. Signs of mercy followed. A converting grace accompanied the word, and under his first extempore sermon three souls were brought to God.

This good beginning was followed by a twofold result. On the one hand, the attention of the people was awakened throughout the parish to the great question of personal religion. The drowsy bell no longer called together the few mechanical attendants who commonly form the congregation of a country parish-church; but a wakeful throng, moving from all parts of the neighbourhood, filled the sanctuary before the service-hour had struck,—some from curiosity, others from concern. The time-hallowed formularies of the Prayer-Book seemed now to have a meaning hitherto unknown; while, blessed with the spirit of devotion, the minister and the better portion of his people felt and proved how suitable is the help they afford for the embodiment in words of contrition for sin, prayer for mercy, and intercession with giving of

thanks for all men. The psalmody, too, had a new element of edification, by the opportune introduction of evangelical hymns; and the pulpit an unwonted attraction in the lively, affectionate, and earnest teachings of a man who, himself made wise to salvation, both reasoned with his hearers of temperance, righteousness, and judgment to come, and preached to them the power and coming of Him who had been sent to bless them, by turning every one of them from his iniquities.

The fabric of the church becoming now too strait for the congregation, Mr. Coke was desirous of adding to the means of accommodation by a new gallery; and at a vestry-meeting, convened for the purpose, he laid the project before the notables of the parish. But here the other side of the picture began to discover itself. Some of the heads of houses in South-Petherton did not approve of the new turn religious matters were taking around them. The curate, instead of being improved, in their estimation had of late sadly degenerated. When he first came among them, he was a steady and inoffensive preacher, a clever whist-player, and a cheerful companion; but of late he had become an ascetical opposer of innocent pastimes, a disturber of families, and a dangerous fanatic. They could not, therefore, by acceding to his present overture, give their countenance to his manner of going on; and, under the influence of these recusants, the vestry resolved that no outlay should be incurred for a gallery in the church. Nothing daunted, however, by this failure, Mr. Coke, with a generous enthusiasm for the promotion of the Gospel among the people, employed a builder himself, and erected the gallery of South-Petherton church at his own private expense.

The moral effect of this decisive token of zeal for the public good consolidated the esteem and confidence of the more religious people, but was lost on such as were of the contrary part, who became more blindly bent on opposing him. He had now to learn for himself how true it is that they who are after the flesh will persecute those who are after the spirit; and that, if any man will live godly in our evil world, he

must be prepared to suffer. The neighbouring clergy also, as if jealous of his rising influence, affected to be alarmed at his so-called irregularities, and, instead of affording him their sympathy, encouraged his opponents. In addition to a variety of pitiful expedients adopted to embarrass his movements and embitter his life, a formal charge was presented against him to the bishop of the diocese. The worthy prelate, however, showed no disposition to put down a man whose only crime was the seeking to promote by every means in his power the object and end for which the Christian ministry had been called into being. He explained to the dissentients that Mr. Coke had not so far infringed on the order of the Church as to expose himself to deprivation; and that, were he even desirous of treating him with severity, the utmost he could legally do would be to suspend him for three months,—a measure which, in his lordship's opinion, would only tend to augment the supposed evils of the case by increasing the curate's influence, and investing him, so to speak, with the honour of martyrdom. Dr. Ross, too, the bishop of the adjoining diocese of Exeter, (a divine so deservedly beloved by his clergy, as combining the blandness of the gentleman with the dignity of the prelate,) having heard the spreading rumours of these disturbances, took so far an interest in Mr. Coke as to write him a letter of friendly admonition. To this he replied in a simple and respectful statement of facts, which both cleared up the bishop's misapprehensions, and gave him a yet more favourable assurance of his correspondent's Christian and clerical integrity.

These are some of the lights and shadows of our curate's life at South-Petherton; in which he but shared the common lot of Christ's true servants, who in all time have done their Master's work amid evil report and good report, in honour and dishonour, as deceivers and yet true, as dying and yet deathless. Nor were his afflictions without their reward, in bringing him nearer to God, in stirring him up to "watch in all things," and strengthening the moral manhood of his soul. Unqualified popularity is dangerous to any minister, and

especially while but yet in his novitiate. But Mr. Coke's trials not only contributed to keep him steady, but to fit him for greater achievements in the progress of toil and triumph which had so auspiciously begun. They formed a component in his discipline of preparation for larger efforts and more glorious rewards; tribulation giving vigour to the patience of hope, and steadfastness to experience. The cedarling in the mountain, rocked by the summer winds, roots itself more firmly in the earth, and lifts its head defiant of the coming tempests of a hundred winters.

CHAPTER VI.

ASPIRATIONS.

At this point in Mr. Coke's history began to be perceptible those first developments of Providence which turned his serious attention to the character and movements of that great religious communion in whose annals he was destined to obtain an everlasting name. Methodism is apostolic Christianity, bearing the token of the world's immemorial scorn in a title of reproach. Hated by the depraved, and misunderstood only by the ignorant, it carries, in the view of all enlightened men, the true signature of the "*prisca fides*," the faith at first delivered to the saints. Its incorrupt doctrine, transcendent and unquenchable zeal, and world-broad designs and activities of mercy, lead the inquirer for its origin to no inferior source than the counsels of that eternal Love which has redeemed mankind. Buried in the apostasy of the middle ages, the diminished fires of primæval Christianity had never been extinct; but, faithfully maintained at the hidden altars of the true, spiritual church, they broke into new radiance at the Reformation of the sixteenth century, and in the later Revival of the eighteenth, with a more potent and effectual grace. The Reformation ushered in by the ministry of Luther was soon overclouded by sinister and worldly influences, which obscured its glory and weakened its spiritual force. Never thoroughly orthodox in doctrine, infected with a certain leaven of Antinomianism, and trammelled with the interference of secular politicians, its religious life declined into formality; and its faith, except in the dead letter of written and ignored confessions, dwindled into the poor delusions of Germanic Rationalism. In contrast with this, the vital Reformation of

the eighteenth century reveals a purity of doctrine, a biblical standard of morals, an expansive zeal, and a deathless life, which seal it with credentials from the throne of Christ, and offer the plain prophetic guarantee that its appointed task will be fulfilled in a consummation to be solemnized in the hymns of a regenerated world. Let "the people called Methodists," who, in so many regions of the earth, think of Wesley as under God their religious father, know, that they may trace through him their Christian genealogy back to the apostolic times. When that servant of God received the knowledge of salvation through the remission of sins, in communion with the Moravian Church, he took his place in a long succession of witnesses of the pristine faith, who, back through the Moravians, the Bohemian Brethren, the Waldenses and their progenitors in the Mediterranean lands, held fast in the dungeons of oppression, the conflicts of war, and the flames of martyrdom, the good deposit which the Redeemer Himself committed to His church. The testimony of Jesus and His salvation then given by Wesley, like the trumpet on Sinai's Mount, waxes louder with the years of time. It speaks to-day in many languages, and calls the wide world to faith and hope; while the cloud, little at first as a man's hand, spreads broadly, and stoops, redundant with blessings, over them who are nigh and them who are afar off.* These words are not written with a sectarian feeling. The genius of Methodism is true catholicity; it could not otherwise be really Christian. It is not the Wesleyan body only who owe a lasting obligation to the men raised up by God as His instruments in this great work; for every communion of the church has more or less partaken of its benefits. Its penetrating ethereal fire has found them all, and is working its heavenly effects in them, in giving vigour to the weak and life to the dead, in strengthening such as do stand, in comforting and helping the weak-hearted, in

* For details, read the Biographies of the Wesleys by Moore, Southey, Watson, and Thomas Jackson; the Centenary volume of the latter; and the Histories of Methodism by Myles, Smith, and Stevens.

lifting up them that had fallen, and inspiring them with high hope of the final victory over their common foe. On both sides of the ocean,—in America, in France and Switzerland, Sweden and Germany,—this breath of the Lord is changing the sombre cold of winter for the sunshine and hopes of the spring.

At the time to which our biography now reverts, this grand religious movement was already in its fifth decade. Though, estimated by its present reach and sway, it was hitherto comparatively a feeble thing, yet, in contrast with the seeming insignificance of its first action, it had already gained a magnitude which began to arrest the attention of the civilized world. Some of its earlier agents had finished their labours. Whitefield had sunk to the grave in his fifty-sixth year,* mourned by myriads of the good on both shores of the Atlantic. Charles Wesley had withdrawn into partial retirement; but the apostle of Methodism was still fulfilling his course, though, like the sun towards evening, descending to the horizon in a blaze of light. At the Conference of 1776, the number of circuits in Great Britain and Ireland was fifty-five; the itinerant preachers were a hundred and fifty-five; the members approached forty thousand; and the fact that Methodism had already struck firm roots in America was seen in the existence of Societies on that continent, numbering nearly seven thousand members.

It was now that the clergyman of South-Petherton, led onward in a way he had not known, was brought to seek and find his lasting rest in the bosom of this despised but beneficent fellowship. Among the contemptible expedients to annoy him resorted to by his opponents in the parish, was one which seemed, in their way of thinking, to concentrate no small amount of mischief, but which proved in reality to be the germ of incalculable good: they would set forth the sum total of their pastor's delinquencies in one exponent, and brand him with the name of A METHODIST.

* He died at Newburyport, in America, September 30th, 1770.

A Methodist: the idea was certainly a new one to Mr. Coke, and set him to thinking. He wished to find out what might be the height and depth of infamy involved in the epithet. Who were the Methodists? What was Methodism?

Up to the present time he had been what we call a High Churchman, a true-hearted Oxonian, steadfast to the traditions of his *alma mater*, with an utter indifference to all sorts of religion outside the walls of the parish-church, and a sovereign contempt for Dissenters. His prospects in the Church, notwithstanding the local annoyances to which we are alluding, were never brighter than now. He had recently taken his highest academical degree, having been created a Doctor of Civil Law in the June of the preceding year;* and a nobleman, who possessed the power to fulfil it, had given him the explicit promise of insuring his ecclesiastical preferment. The high tone of his mind regarding Dissenters may be illustrated by a circumstance which I might have mentioned in a former chapter. At the time when Mr. Coke was making his first serious efforts after salvation at South-Petherton, a worthy minister of the Gospel, the Rev. Mr. Hull, pastor of the Dissenting congregation there, having been made acquainted with the hopeful dispositions of the new curate, ventured to address a letter designed to encourage him, and to open the way, if agreeable, for a personal interview. Mr. Coke was both pleased and profited by the letter, and replied to that effect. Hereupon a correspondence took place between the men, which contributed to increase their mutual respect. Mr. Hull then proposed an interview, which threw our curate into a dilemma. His church-prejudices were so high that he could neither go into Mr. Hull's house nor admit him into his own; and, in order to avail himself of an advantage which he secretly desired, he made an arrangement that they should meet, as on a neutral ground, at the farm-house of a friend in the country. Dr. Coke, reverting to

* June 13th, 1775.

those days, said, that "a while before, his high Anglican prejudices held so strong a sway in him, that, had Mr. Hull been dying, and needed the offices of devotion, he believed he should have declined the task."

But these old things, stale and unprofitable, had now passed away, and all was becoming new. Not even the open imputation of Methodism now moved him, except to inquire into the true merits of a system that so divided the opinions of the world; and, in a state of mind which late and existing circumstances tended to make what may be termed a process of transition rather than a state, he looked out restlessly for the full truth which he had become aware that he knew but in part, and prophesied in part; while the new life which the Spirit of God had breathed into his soul made what things he had formerly heard or read, with indifference or disapproval, of the Founder of Methodism, as attractive as they had once been the reverse.

These incipient tendencies grew stronger as Providence gradually opened his way to a personal knowledge of Methodism itself. His acquaintance with it began with the least, and progressed to the greatest. He was first enabled to examine it in its influence on the lives of some humble members of the communion, in one of the valleys of Devonshire. In a visit to that part of the country, he casually learned that a small Society existed in the adjoining village, and he sought them out. In the leader he found an aged, unlettered man, who, nevertheless, by a prayerful converse with his Bible, and the teaching of the Holy Spirit, had been made wise to salvation, and able to teach others. With this devout Christian the Doctor passed many hours in congenial intercourse, learning from his lips some precious and confirmatory lessons on the way of faith, and its renovating effects upon the heart and life. He returned from this visit with a strong sense of the moral power which the doctrines of Methodism exerted in forming the lives of the poor to virtue. He saw that it was capable of introducing into their hearts

and homes the principles which make life serene and good,—“love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance ; against which there is no law.” This was a right beginning ; it gave him at once a rational and religious assurance of the thorough strength and solidity of the basis on which the system is founded. He was then led onward to a higher step. Near Taunton, some miles from his own parish, lived at that time a clergyman named Brown, a personal friend and admirer of Mr. Wesley. With this gentleman Dr. Coke had recently become acquainted ; and now, under the impulses at work in his mind, he found him to be the very man he stood in need of to elucidate the theological difficulties which in some degree yet beclouded him, to lend him books which bore immediately on the subject, and to introduce him, if he wished it, to the Founder of Methodism himself.

Among the works which this reverend friend lent the Doctor were the Sermons and Journals of Mr. Wesley, and the then lately published but already celebrated Checks to Antinomianism, by Fletcher, of Madeley. In the eager perusal of these invaluable writings, not only were his theological principles set upon an immutable foundation, and his soul’s best feelings strengthened, but the nature of those evangelic enterprises to which those great and good men had consecrated their lives unfolded themselves to his delighted view, and kindled in him an ardent admiration of those servants of God, a love for their high vocation, and a desire, which rose at length to be the passion of his life, to be their companion in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ,—a partaker of their glorious toils and their unearthly reward.

His sentiments toward Mr. Fletcher I can best unfold in the terms of a letter which he seems to have been constrained to address to him about this time,* in which he says :—

* Dated August 28th, 1775. The autograph is in the possession of Dr. Hoole.

“I take the liberty, though unknown to you, but not unacquainted with your admirable publications, of writing you a letter of sincerest thanks for the spiritual instruction as well as entertainment which they have afforded me; and the spirit of candour and Christian charity which breathes throughout your writings, as well as the charming character which my best of earthly friends (the Rev. Mr. Brown, of Kingston, near Taunton) has given me of you, emboldens me to hope that, though my situation in life be only that of a poor curate of a parish, you will excuse this liberty I have taken of addressing you in the fulness of my heart.

“You are indubitably, sir, a sincere friend of the Gospel of Jesus Christ: I am also an humble admirer of the blessed Jesus; and it is on that foundation only that I wish, and in that only I am sure I can recommend myself to you. Your excellent ‘Checks to Antinomianism’ have riveted me in an abhorrence and detestation of the peculiar tenets of Calvin; and the monstrous errors into which those great and good men, Bishops Hopkins and Beveridge, (whose memories I highly reverence,) have run, have frequently filled me with wonder. Your ‘Essay on Truth’ has been more particularly blessed to me. Your ‘Scripture Scales’ I am just going to read with great attention. Many thanks to you, sir, for your treatise on the Fallen State of Man: it has been of service to me, and of much more, I have reason to think, to many of my congregation. O, sir, I have frequently prayed to my God that He will make you a great pillar of His church. In return I do humbly beg that you will pray for me. I am sure you will grant me the favour, when I inform you that a thousand or more immortal souls come to me every Lord’s day to receive their portion of the manna of the word, the bread of everlasting life.

“I will so far transgress against the public and your dear flock, as to request an answer. I am almost afraid to hope for more. May the God who loves you, and whom you love,

make you a great instrument for His glory in this life, and grant you the height of your ambition in the next !”

The serious purpose as well as strong desire to become acquainted with these apostolic men for himself, was now to be gratified. In the same month of August Mr. Wesley had come into that part of the west of England; and, learning that after preaching at Taunton he would be the guest of Mr. Brown at Kingston, the Doctor rode over to the latter place, and had the great pleasure of being introduced to Mr. Wesley by their mutual friend, and spending the night under the same hospitable roof. With the appearance, manner, and conversation of Mr. Wesley, Dr. Coke received the most agreeable impressions. As the scholar, the saint, and the clergyman, he seemed to approach his ideal of the proper and the perfect. On the other hand, that Wesley was ingratiated by the conversation and spirit of his polished yet gentle visiter, is evident from the manner in which he has made a memorandum of the interview in his Journal :—“I preached at Taunton,* and afterwards went with Mr. Brown to Kingston. Here I found a clergyman, Dr. Coke, late a gentleman-commoner of Jesus College, Oxford, who came twenty miles on purpose [to meet me]. I had much conversation with him, and an union then began which I trust shall never end.”

In the morning Mr. Wesley walked in the garden, and Dr. Coke joined him to improve the opportunity of obtaining his counsel. He recounted to Mr. Wesley the exercises of mind through which he had of late passed, and told him of those solemn stirrings of his heart to enter upon a wider sphere of labour in making known to the world the Saviour he had found. Mr. Wesley, though he doubtless heard these recitals with a sacred pleasure, seems to have thought at the moment that the Doctor's resolves would be all the stronger and purer for a little longer trial in the ordinary duties of the parish; and

* August 13th, 1776.

therefore, instead of pressing him at once into the Methodist cause, advised him to go on as usual in his parochial services, “doing all the good he could, visiting from house to house, omitting no part of his clerical duty, and avoiding every reasonable ground of offence;”—in all which we listen to the dictates of the sober-minded wisdom, the Christian sagacity, by which, through the grace given to him, he was enabled, in such multitudes of cases, to suggest the right counsel at the right time.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TRUE CAREER OPENED.

DOCTOR COKE rode back to South-Petherton pensive, and yet consoled. Though no immediate prospect of a coalition with the Methodist ministry revealed itself, his purpose had become more defined and decisive. The die might be said to have been already cast. The sacrifices incident upon this choice gave him no serious concern: the peace of mind he had already found in the very contemplation of the measure was to him the earnest of a real good which would never be his own in the pursuit or even the possession of the tithes of a benefice, or the dignity of a mitre. Besides, however great his admiration of the Anglican Church in the ideal, his actual experience had by no means tended to corroborate it; as, in proportion to the zeal with which he had tried to fulfil the vows he had made for its service, he had gathered but a harvest of unkindness and reproach. Then, for Mr. Wesley himself he had received the inspirations of a friendship which was destined to endure with existence. The apostle of Methodism had won the affections of his heart, and he began to long to surrender himself, and to serve with him as his son in the Gospel. The words of Ruth to Naomi might have been employed by the younger of these two clergymen to the venerable man who had awakened in his breast such a refined and filial love: "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me."

Already he would give proof of the sincerity of these dispositions by obeying Mr. Wesley's advice, in devoting himself heartily to the duties of his present position. The tone of his ministry was now more decided than ever; and the innovations he had made, in preaching sometimes on the unconsecrated floor of a cottage or barn, took a sort of Methodistic form in being systematically arranged; the parish being remodelled, so to speak, into a Circuit. He did not, as the Methodist preachers, print a "Plan;" but on Sundays, after the second lesson, he would read a paper of his appointments for the ensuing week, with the place and time of service. The disgust of his opponents in the parish became now supreme. Their failure with the bishop made them the more importunate with the rector, who up to this time had been for the most part quiescent toward his curate's irregular proceedings. He yielded at last,—it may have been for the sake of peace,—and consented to dismiss him. And, either to gratify the malice of the Doctor's enemies, or merely to prevent a scene on the occasion of a farewell sermon, the decision was abruptly announced to him at the close of the service in the church, in the presence of the listening congregation. What rendered this transaction the more heartless and unchristian was, that, by a preconcerted scheme, Dr. Coke, in passing out of the doors of the church for the last time, was saluted by a dissonant peal from the bells in the tower.

But on which side lay the real disgrace? on that of the persecuted minister, or that of his parishioners? The day, too, was not far distant, when they themselves felt how the case stood, and when "the ignorant fumes that had mantled their clearer reason" began to pass away, and many of them sought, as we shall have to mention, to make Dr. Coke the *amende honorable*.

Nor were there wanting among them now some who were his steadfast friends. These, while they witnessed the distress of his feelings, augmented by the deprivation of any opportunity of explanation from the pulpit, through the precipitancy

of the measure, and by the ungenerous attack made upon him from that place by his successor in the curacy, urged him to make his defence and deliver his own soul by publicly addressing the people in the open air. And accordingly, on the arrival of Sunday, he preached a discourse in the vicinity of the church immediately after the breaking up of the congregation, who gathered around, and heard with more candour and attention than might have been expected. Under these encouraging circumstances he announced that he would once more meet them on the following Sunday, and give them his farewell words. His active opponents were not disposed to allow him a second advantage, and gave him intelligible notice that, if he appeared, it would be at the risk of his limbs or life. And, to render these menaces the more significant, sundry hampers of stones were brought to the spot, like a park of artillery drawn up on a field marked out for battle. The Doctor, however, was not to be daunted, nor were some of his friends, who were resolved to stand, and, if need were, to suffer with him. Among these were a young lady and gentleman named Edmonds, who resided in the country part of the parish, Dissenters by family ties, but who had been drawn to the church by Dr. Coke's amiable manners and evangelic doctrine. On this occasion Miss Edmonds stood on one side of him, and her brother on the other. Some other staunch adherents completed his body-guard. The assailants were thus counterchecked, as they could not reach their intended victim without first attacking persons who had never offended them. So the farewell warning was faithfully given, and the rejected minister withdrawn.

Dr. Coke had now become plainly aware of an impending crisis in his life. Two modes of procedure were open to him; —to obtain another parish, conciliate his offended patron, and become in good earnest a postulant for the honours of the Church; or, to follow those sacred impulses which, if obeyed, would require him to renounce all such expectations, for the world-contemned and laborious life of the Methodist Itine-

rancy. After serious deliberation he resolved to carry the decision at which he had arrived into immediate effect, and put himself into communication with Mr. Wesley. Before making any formal compact, Mr. Wesley seems to have wished to give the Doctor further time for consideration, and with greater advantage, by taking him with him in his journeys, giving him opportunities to preach in the congregations, explaining to him the practical discipline of the Societies, and introducing him to the preachers. The Conference of 1777 was about to be held at Bristol, and the latter purpose was there more extensively accomplished. Among the assembled ministers Coke had the great gratification of first seeing the Rev. John Fletcher, whose presence with them, to use the words of Mr. Benson's journal, "was attended with a blessing. His appearance, his exhortations, and his prayers broke most of our hearts, and filled us with shame and self-abasement." Dr. Coke here received his more complete impressions of respect for the Methodist preachers. In their solemn deliberations on the spiritual state of their people, and their fervent zeal for the further manifestation of the truth at home and abroad, he found he had come among men entirely consecrated to one work, and one on which hung the everlasting interests of millions. This fanned the spark already glowing in his soul, and he longed to drink of the cup which they drank, and to be baptized with their baptism.

After the Conference he commenced a course of agency, either under the direction of Mr. Wesley, or personally with him. "August 19th," writes the latter, "I went forward to Taunton with Dr. Coke, who, being dismissed from his curacy, has bidden adieu to his honourable name, and determined to cast in his lot with us."* Nor can we doubt, looking, as we are enabled to do, upon the ever-multiplying fruitage of good to which that determination led, that it was the right one. A career in which a less amount of usefulness

* Journal, 1777.

and another where a vastly greater amount could be achieved, were opened to his choice; and he felt it a moral obligation to God and to man to enter upon the way to the greater. Looking upon human life, not from the stand-point of the world, but that afforded us in the Gospel revelation, he could not hesitate. He saw his fellow-men in all the climes of the earth perishing in sin, while the Gospel, as he knew by experience, was the power of God to salvation in every one who believeth; assured that the provisions of redeeming mercy are co-extensive with the wants of our dying race; that, by grace, mankind, wherever they are found, may be saved by faith, and that faith cometh by hearing. The alternative was now before him, whether, in these circumstances, he would carry the announcements of mercy to the few or to the many; to a little flock of rustics in some obscure hamlet, or, by his voice, or those grand missionary agencies which he was hereafter enabled to inaugurate, to nations and to kingdoms, to peoples and to tongues. He could not, at that epoch of his life, have had any definite idea of the grand task which Providence would devolve upon him; but there were already stirrings within him, and visions dawning to urge him to arise and make the entire oblation of himself, in soul and body, to fulfil the will of God. In presence of these great realities, wealth and worldly honour faded into shadows. The cross, and then the crown! To him to live should be Christ, and to die gain. The sublime resolve received the signature of Heaven imprinted on his heart, in those refreshing tokens of forgiving and renewing grace which set him free from all misgiving, and enabled him to surmount for ever the doubts and fears, the feebleness and trammels, of the past,—as the eagle shakes off the night-dew from his wings, and spreads them to meet the morning sun.

BOOK II.

LABOUR.

CHAPTER I.

PRELIMINARY LABOURS IN ENGLAND AND IRELAND.

DR. COKE entered on the Methodist ministry just as he was completing his thirtieth year. It was an epoch of entire consecration. To Him who had loved him, and given Himself for him, to make him a king and a priest unto God, even the Father, he surrendered mind and body, fortune, learning, life, and all. The words of the vow he found in the Hymn-Book of the people among whom he had chosen to live and to die, described to the letter the supreme purpose and prayer which henceforward swayed the movements of his life :

“ Jesus, confirm my heart’s desire
To work and speak and think for Thee ;
Still let me guard the holy fire,
And still stir up Thy gift in me :

“ Ready for all Thy perfect will,
My acts of faith and love repeat,
Till death Thy endless mercies seal,
And make the sacrifice complete.”

The doctrines of Methodism had already won the full consent of his intellect and heart, and especially as he knew them, more and more, to be not mere scholastic credenda, but truths most intimately bound up with his own salvation. Thus, while he eagerly read such of the Methodist literature

as was then extant, and conversed with the men whose ministry was devoted to the defence and propagation of the principles it unfolded, he became every day more firmly grounded in its theology. His active intelligence enabled him, with the explanations of Mr. Wesley himself, and the advantage of being much with him in his pastoral visits to the Societies in London and the country, to form a correct and practical acquaintance with the discipline and usages of the Connexion, so far as developed at that day.

We have said that the step he had recently taken introduced him to a sphere of action far wider and more important than any he could have occupied as a parish-clergyman. This would appear, were the scenery of his life to close with the period to which the hasty notices of the present chapter are devoted. The *quondam* curate of South-Petherton first re-appears in the metropolis of England. The Methodists of London had heard already passages of his history which insured him at once a welcome to their homes and their hearts. Thousands gathered when he preached. At the old "Foundery," Moorfields, then in its last days, at the chapel in West-street, Seven Dials, and the other ancient spots of Methodist resort, the crowds found no adequate accommodation; and, like Whitefield and the Wesleys, he led them out to worship with gathering multitudes under the vaulted canopy of the skies. One favourite ground for such assemblages was the open space now covered by the neighbourhood of Tavistock-square. There, and in such other places, the Doctor, in gown and cassock, preached to the listening throng the Gospel which he himself had found, and which became to many who heard him the power Divine unto salvation.

The style of Dr. Coke's preaching, though not distinguished by the serene power which marked that of Mr. Wesley, or the towering passion that broke like a tempest upon the soul with some climax in a sermon by Whitefield, had nevertheless great attractions with the people, for its heartiness and simplicity. The staple matter of his discourses consisted of the great

themes of the Gospel, practically applied to the momentous question of personal salvation, and the right conduct of life. He would sometimes devote a sermon to the defence of the truth, whether of Divine revelation at large, the supreme Divinity of Jesus Christ, or the reality and extent of the redemption accomplished by His death; topics with which, from the peculiarity of his own experience, he had become intimately conversant; and in reasoning on which he often spoke words which acted with an electric effect on minds passing through exercises similar to those through which he had been so mercifully brought. In those moments heart spoke to heart, and the word was with power. And in contending, and often vehemently, for the faith once delivered to the saints, he forgot not the danger of resting in accurate ideas of Christian doctrine without converting grace, but urged upon the unregenerate the one thing needful, and on the true believer the obligation to "live the Gospel" in thought, word, and work. The congregation felt that the preacher was in earnest, and they became so. He spoke with the utmost confidence from personal conviction, and he won the confidence of his hearers. He came home to the apprehension of the poor by homely, familiar phrases; and to fastidious ears, it may be, in a vocabulary a degree too vulgar. He was nevertheless followed not only by the ignorant, but by the learned too. The fashionable and gay took their place with the ascetic, and the rich and poor met together, and many of them never in vain. The young Doctor of Oxford, who had so manfully taken up the badge of shame for Christ's sake, drew crowds, were it only from curiosity, or the better wish to give him a silent greeting; and if others came with a sentiment of prejudice, it commonly gave way before more genial feelings. The prepossessing appearance of the preacher, the sincerity and benevolence which beamed in his face, and spoke in tones always melodious, except when strained by emotions which strove for a mightier vehicle of expression than the compass of his voice could furnish, the solemn

fervour of his spirit, his one desire and life-passion to bring perishing sinners to God their Saviour,—all contributed to give him the ascendant in their good-will, which is so favourable to the minister as a preparation for the successful issue to his appeals. To say that Dr. Coke's style was but mediocre, is no disparagement. He did not affect the transcendental, but chose to move on solid ground rather than to balloon among the clouds. His discourses embodied the substantial lessons of the Gospel, and were delivered with vivacity and unction. He explained the doctrines of Christianity, and applied them with the importunate fervour of an anxious desire for the salvation of his hearers. Hence the peroration of his most argumentative discourses told with heavy force on the mind already convinced of the truth. Thus, at the close of a sermon on the Divinity of Christ, when arraigning the insult offered to the Saviour by the unbelief which denies Him the homage due to the majesty of God, he continues: "But He will not long be robbed. The day will soon arrive when every tongue shall confess Him, and every knee bow down; when they who have in heart or life denied Him, and persevered in their impenitence, shall feel His Godhead's power to their eternal sorrow. Now therefore 'kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.' Now come to Him who alone can give you life; for He who hath the Son hath life, and he who hath not the Son of God hath not life.

"And while this sacred doctrine is filled with terror towards the unbelieving and disobedient, it affords the sweetest consolation to the truly sincere. Thou poor repentant soul, come to this Depth of Comfort, and try. Consider that He who made thee was thy Sacrifice, and is now thy Intercessor. He has engraven thee on the palms of His hands, and carries thy name on His breastplate before the throne. Behold Him, behold Him! Thou canst not doubt His power, for He is God supreme: and canst thou doubt His love, when He

redeemed thee on His cross?" So preached he, and so many who heard him believed.

Dr. Coke's name first appeared on the Minutes of the following Conference, of 1778, among those of the preachers of the London Circuit. But, though nominally stationed in the metropolis, he henceforth spent but a fragment of his time there, now and then, moving meantime upon evangelizing or pastoral engagements in various parts of the kingdom, sometimes in company with Mr. Wesley, and at others acting as his authorized representative. Wesley was now verging on his eighty-first year, and the assistance derived from Coke's help he found most acceptable. The Doctor took off much of the labour of his extensive correspondence on a vast variety of details relating to the chapels and Societies. There lie before me now some letters of this description. Here is one to Mr. Tooth, the "Society and House Steward at City-road:"—"My very dear Brother, Mr. Wesley desires me to inform you that he insists upon it that all the money received from the burial-ground be appointed to the house-steward's expenses and affairs; and therefore he desires you to take particular care that every shilling of the money be reserved for that purpose. He also desires you to do everything in your power to secure the front of the gallery before to-morrow se'nnight, as Mr. Wesley will preach in the New Chapel that morning."

Another, to Mr. Gidley, of Exeter, with a sheet of accounts relating to the building of the first chapel in that city:—"Mr. Wesley is still of opinion that the Minutes of the Conference ought to be complied with, in having the seats in the middle, with a rail running through the midst. Will you, therefore, be pleased to see that the alterations be made, if not done already?..... You will be a proper person to be a trustee of the Exeter house. Will you ask our London friend who is lately come to live at Exeter, whether he will give me leave to nominate him? Have you asked Mr. Roberts whether he will be one? Between you and me, I rather object to Mr. ——. Whatever thou putttest thine hand unto, do it

with thy might.....He promised to give me a book. If he will give me Rogers's Sermons, No. 1,635, and the Four Orations of Athanasius against the Arians, No. 1,148, if they be not disposed of, I shall be obliged to him."

Another, to Mr. Wesley, dated, "Near Dublin :"—
"Honoured and very dear Sir, I have met the classes, and have no doubt but there is a considerable revival in this Society. One of Sister King's classes evidences it more than any other class I have ever met. We have not yet met the Gravel-walk classes ; so I cannot speak positively about the numbers. I am now in the boat returning from Prosperous, a place eighteen miles from Dublin, where a brother of Mr. Harry Brooke carries on a large cotton-manufacture. The Parliament has lent him £25,000 for twelve years without interest. I had a large congregation in the house of Mr. Ogden, Mr. Brooke's partner, in the evening, and about eighty this morning at five. The preachers intend to be there weekly. The labourers, they inform me, amount to above 2,000 ; and, as most of them are Papists, Mr. Brooke has given the priest a room to perform mass in, on condition that he neither says nor does anything to prevent his people from attending the preaching of the Methodists ; with which condition the priest has complied. I really do not know one preacher in Ireland, of those who are to remain, who appears to me to be every way qualified to be assistant of the Dublin Circuit. I sincerely wish you would send one from England ; but he should be a thorough Methodist. What do you think of James Rogers ? If you would make him a promise that he shall return to England after two years in Dublin, I think he will come ; and Andrew Blair can fill his place for a month or three weeks, while he steps over the Channel and marries Miss Roe. Henry Moore would do, but London is of still more importance ; and our Cork friends would be angry if he was removed to any other place in Ireland.

"You remember the woman when we were in Dublin who pretended to be possessed. Soon after I left, the Papists had

appointed a solemn day when the devil was to be cast out in their chapel at Lazar-Hill. Exorcists were prepared for the purpose, and it was to be one of the most notable days of the age. The *Sieur Palmi* was desirous to make a trial of her sincerity beforehand. They consented. A few days before the grand miracle was to be performed, a few eminent persons of every party met in the *Sieur Palmi's* house. The woman was admitted, but her husband excluded. She told the company that when she was touched with a cross, or with holy water, the evil spirit was outrageous. A messenger was immediately dispatched to Lazar-Hill for a cross and holy water; and they were brought and laid upon a table. The woman was ordered to kneel down with her back to the table. 'Now,' says the *sieur*, 'we will try the experiment of the cross:' on which he took a large key, which he had concealed for the purpose, and laid it on her neck; on which she instantly fell into violent convulsions. When these were over, 'Now,' says the *sieur*, 'we will try the experiment of the holy water:' on which he took up a basin of common water, which he had concealed also for the purpose, leaving the holy water on the table, sprinkled a shower of the common water upon her, when she fell into more violent convulsions than before. The *sieur* then asked the company, whether they were fully satisfied of the imposture. They all confessed that they were. 'Then,' says he, 'if you will keep the woman and her husband in custody till I return, I will instantly wait on the lord mayor for a warrant.' They consented, and the warrant was brought: but they had meantime suffered the impostors to escape; and the gentry of Lazar-Hill chapel hushed up the business as they could."

A difficulty having occurred at Bath, leading to the suspension of one of the preachers,* Dr. Coke was directed to give his attentions to that Society for a while, among whom

* The affair of Mr. M^cNab, who had opposed Mr. Wesley's wish that a clergyman named Smyth, then residing in Bath, should occupy the pulpit every Sunday evening.

his ministry contributed to allay the injurious excitement occasioned by that circumstance, and to recommend the then feeble cause of Methodism in that centre of fashion. Wherever he went, whether to cities or hamlets, he went to do one work,—to promote the salvation of souls, and the upbuilding of the church. In some places he found himself honoured very highly for his work's sake; in others, treated with contempt and insult. An incident illustrative of the latter sort of experience occurred in one of his peregrinations in Wiltshire, which I will recount in the words of a gentleman * who has given me the recital as he had it from eye-witnesses belonging to his own family:—

“My native village, Ramsbury, in the county of Wilts., was honoured by the visits and ministrations both of the Rev. John Wesley and the Rev. Dr. Coke. A goodly family of the name of Nind resided at Ramsbury-Park farm, about a mile from the village. Mr. Nind was a local preacher, and established a Methodist church in his house. Between this family and Mr. Wesley there was a strong attachment, and of the hospitalities at Ramsbury Park he regularly availed himself in his journeys to and from London and Bristol, it being about midway between the two cities. Writing from hence to his brother Charles, on October 19th, 1775, he says, ‘This is a lovely spot, and a lovely family. It is a pity but that you could call here.’ Writing from London, October 28th, he says, ‘At Ramsbury Park, about a mile to the left of the high road, lives James Nind, local preacher, and general steward for the Circuit, on a farm of £500 a year. His wife, Sally Nind, is one of the most amiable women I know. They mightily desire you would spend a few days with them.’ On the night before writing the former letter Mr. Wesley had preached in the large room at the village poor-house, a building which was purchased sixty years afterwards by my father, and the large room appropriated to the use of the first Sunday-school ever held in the parish.”

* The Rev. William Edwards.

In the course of Dr. Coke's itinerations he came to Ramsbury. "In the centre of the village," writes Mr. Edwards, "is an open square of considerable size, on the sides of which are two or three inns, the post-office, and some of the principal shops. In the middle of this square, and overshadowing the greater part of it, is a venerable hollow wych-elm tree, popularly known in the neighbourhood as 'the witch-tree,'—a name which has had the effect of keeping it free from the company of children and superstitious adults after dark. Beneath this tree Dr. Coke took his stand to preach the Gospel of Christ. As soon as he had commenced the service, he and his audience were attacked by a turbulent mob, headed by the vicar of the parish. Stones and sticks were plentifully used. Dr. Coke was violently pushed from his stand, and his gown torn into shreds. Nothing daunted, he continued the service. The vicar then thought of another expedient, and gave the order, 'Bring out the fire-engine.' The mandate was obeyed, and both preacher and congregation were compelled to retire before the well-directed volleys of this liquid artillery. But, while leaving the square, the Doctor turned, and remarked to the people, that there were other uses for the fire-engines, of which Providence might soon permit the perpetrators of this outrage to become well aware. His words were drowned by the cry of 'False prophet!' Yet, within a fortnight a fire broke out which destroyed nearly all the houses in the square, and extended a considerable distance down the street of the village.

"Two or three young men, farmers' sons, not at that time making any profession of religion, among whom were my grandfather, David, and his brother, Job Edwards, pained at the conduct of the clergyman and his adherents, and astonished at the patience exhibited by Dr. Coke, took the Doctor under their protection, and shielded him from the violence of the mob when at its height. Shortly after this, all the family except my grandfather removed to Clarendon Park, near Salisbury. While there, the youngest brother,

Joseph, hearing that an itinerant clergyman was announced to preach in the open air, attended the service. The preacher was Dr. Coke, and under the sermon he was deeply convinced of sin. He then prevailed upon his elder brother Job to go with him to the services of the Methodists, and soon both the brothers joined the Society and obtained a sense of forgiveness. They subsequently became class-leaders and local preachers, and were instrumental in introducing preaching into several of the country-places of the Salisbury Circuit."

In another west-country progress, Dr. Coke revisited his former parish of South-Petherton. From the spirit which predominated among the people at the time of his sorrowful exodus, he might have expected a doubtful welcome. But a change for the better had commenced not long after his departure. Ill feeling had given way to reflection. When gone, it was perceived too late that they had banished a friend and benefactor, whose only fault had been his zeal to do them good. The voice of the faithful pastor was no longer heard in the pulpit; the poor missed his bounty, the wretched their comforter; and depravity alone felt a relief by his removal. His re-appearance, therefore, came on many of them like a ray of sunshine. A sort of demonstration took place. Even the magnates who had the command of the bells gave their voice for a peal of welcome. "We chimed him out," said they, "and now we will ring him in." So ears and hearts were opened while he preached to them the good tidings of the kingdom. He had long since accepted the name they had given him, "the Methodist;" and now, wondrous to say, many of them were not unwilling to accept it too, and from that time a Methodist cause began to exist there. In a letter to Mr. Gidley, 1780, I find the Doctor had resolved to build a chapel in the town.* And in another letter to the Rev. R. Lomas, at a later period, in describing some operations in the west, he writes: "I made a visit to my old place,

* "Will you give me leave to insert you as a trustee for my little preaching-house at South-Petherton?"

South-Petherton, and spent three nights there. One night I preached in the church to (I suppose) two thousand people, who came not only from the little town, but from all the villages round about; and I wept over them, in a manner I never before, I think, wept over any congregation in my life, except two or three,—one at Manchester, and one in the Pit, in Cornwall. A second evening I preached at a village called Dowlish, where a pious lady, Miss Gibson, has turned part of her house into a chapel, which I opened. The other night I collected most of those who had earnest desires at South-Petherton, to the amount of about forty. Sixteen of them appeared to prize Christian fellowship; and therefore I united them in class, and got Brother Stuckey of Ilminster, five miles off, to promise to lead them every Thursday evening, till the Lord shall raise up a leader amongst themselves. There are two other places (Lampport and Somerton) to be added to the list, where we have reason to believe that a missionary would be received."

I have already said that Dr. Coke often showed great zeal in the defence of Christianity from the attacks of unbelievers; and, in his care for the progress of the Methodist cause, he entertained an habitual jealousy of whatever would throw a cloud over the lustre of its clear testimony to the truth as it is in Jesus. In the course of this year, (1780,) however, he permitted this zeal to carry him beyond the limits of true discretion. He had somehow formed an opinion that two of the most eminent ministers in the Connexion, Messrs. Joseph Benson and Samuel Bradburn,—each of them at once a good divine and a great preacher,—were nevertheless tainted with the heresy of Arianism! Before taking any public action in the matter, he stated to them his fears in a private correspondence. Bradburn responded by an indignant denial, and a most emphatic confession of his faith in the true divinity of the Redeemer; but Benson, offended at a charge so extravagantly strange, treated it rather with a dignified reserve than as a subject which needed many words of explanation.

Dissatisfied with Mr. Benson's style of dealing with the matter, the Doctor resolved to bring it before the approaching Conference, and communicated his intention, with the grounds of it, to several of the preachers. In a letter to one of them, Mr. Harrison, at Gainsborough, he transcribes the reply he had received from each of the ministers in question. "Mr. Bradburn," says he, "clears himself entirely from the charge. I give you an extract from his letter:—

"'To put the matter beyond all doubt, I now most solemnly and religiously declare, I always did, and do now believe, that Jesus Christ is the One Supreme, Eternal, Self-Existent Jehovah; that He is, in the most extensive sense of the word, Equal with the Father. I do believe the same Jesus who tasted death for the sin of the world, who was born of the Virgin Mary and buried in Joseph's sepulchre, was, as touching His human nature, as truly man as I am; and, as touching His Divine, as truly God from all eternity as the Father. The distinguishing tenet of Arius was, he believed there was a time when the Son of God was not: Socinus believed He had no being till He was conceived of the Virgin Mary: I believe in the grammatical sense of the Athanasian Creed, that Jesus Christ is, as touching His Godhead, without beginning, the Father of Eternities. In other words, I believe a distinct personality and precise co-equality in the Glorious Trinity. What can I say more? If Jesus Christ be not truly and essentially God, the Scriptures are lies, and the Gospel a fiction.' " So far Mr. Bradburn.

"But how differently does Mr. Benson write! To give you an extract from his first letter:—'You are apprehensive that I do not believe Jesus Christ to be the One Supreme, Independent, Self-Existent God. In answer hereto, I observe, this manner of speaking, become very fashionable of late, is in my judgment very improper and unscriptural, not to say subversive of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity; which, if it teaches any thing above another, certainly teaches that there is one God and one Mediator between God and man,

the Man Christ Jesus. And I desire to know from you, dear sir, whether you mean by this language to exclude the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ from having any proper Godhead at all, or (I should rather say) existence; or whether you mean to confound the Persons of the Father and the Son, and to signify that there is no Mediator between God and man?' [Mr. Benson goes on to quote two or three texts of Scripture, and proceeds:] 'You see, my dear sir, in all these, as in a thousand other passages, the only true God is expressly distinguished from Jesus Christ whom He hath sent, and who is the Mediator between Him and us.' Afterwards, indeed, he says that in another point of view he believes Jesus Christ to be God, and one with the Father, &c.; as Arius would have granted as well as himself.....

"I am exceedingly alarmed; for I am jealous of the honour of my Redeemer. I can say from my heart, however some have misrepresented me, that I esteem the body of Methodist preachers as the most important and useful body of men in this kingdom; and it is my ambition to labour hand in hand in connexion with them till death. But if the Arian sentiment be so far tolerated that persons of that opinion be permitted to preach in our pulpits, I shall hardly know what to think.....I can truly say that I love Mr. Benson not only with a love of pity on account of his error, but with a love of friendship and complacency on account of his many amiable qualities; but he is a subtle casuist, and therefore, holding such an error, a very dangerous man."

In these reflections, however, Dr. Coke was himself in error. They who know Mr. Benson know that he was as sound in the faith as the Doctor. Of the two the more deep divine, he was in the mental habit of recognising distinctions and differences of which more superficial believers are hardly cognisant. Mr. Benson's faith was like adamant for firmness, and for being without a flaw. At the Conference this became apparent, when the whole matter was investigated before a committee appointed by Mr. Wesley for that purpose. Mr.

Benson was fully exonerated from the charge ; and Dr. Coke was so fully assured of his friend's orthodoxy, that, on the delivery of the verdict by the committee, he stood up before the Conference, and solicited to be permitted to ask Mr. Benson's pardon before them all. They shook hands in token of reconciliation, and afterward continued excellent friends.

In 1782 Dr. Coke visited Ireland. The preachers in that country had been increasing in numbers for many years, and now needed an organic constitution as a Conference. Hitherto their affairs had been transacted in that held annually in England ; but they had now attained an extent and gravity which made it expedient to give the Irish ministry a corporate *status* of its own, and Dr. Coke, by delegation from Mr. Wesley, convened them for that purpose in Dublin. The acts of this first Irish Conference were not printed. Coke, who was the first president, continued to hold that office with but few intermissions through the remainder of his life. He became intimately acquainted with the details of Methodism on that side of the Channel ; and both preachers and people ever found in him—a most uncompromising opponent, indeed, to every moral or Methodistical irregularity, but—a faithful counsellor and a loving friend. They knew his worth, and to this day revere his name. In their letter to the English Conference in 1805, the Irish preachers, referring to their president, and requesting his re-appointment to their chair for the following year, say, “ Our love and respect for him increase every year, so that we were ready to look upon ourselves as orphans when contrary winds delayed his coming so long.”

It was while on his second journey in Ireland that the Doctor received intelligence of the decease of his mother. Mrs. Coke died in 1783 in London, where she had resided with her son. In his unavoidable absence, her remains were attended to the family-vault at Brecon by his trusty and well-beloved friend, Mr. Tooth, the steward of City-Road chapel ; as appears from a letter to that gentleman, in which the

Doctor expresses his obligations for the kindness shown him in that time of need.

In the year following Coke was engaged in some diplomatic services which had a powerful bearing on the stability of the Methodist cause for all after-time. Its venerable founder having already outlived the ordinary term allotted to mankind, the fate of the Connexion after his approaching decease was a problem much discussed both by its friends and its foes. It was apparent on both sides that on its then present basis the Methodist economy was insecure. It rested on the frail life of one very aged man. What the Grand Monarque said of France, Mr. Wesley might have said of Methodism,—“*C'est Moi!*” He was its legal impersonation; and with him its formal existence would altogether pass away, or be liable to a thousand changes. What was wanting, therefore, was some act of transfer, by which its identity would be perpetuated when he should have left the world.

It is true that Mr. Wesley, who from the beginning had been “the seat and centre of all power and authority” in the Methodist system, had of later years gradually devolved the administrative government of the Societies on the Conference; reserving to himself a final veto on all matters. He had also, in the prospect of death, appointed that a committee of the Conference, consisting of three or of seven members, should be invested with the power which he had thus retained for his own life; a proposal which had met with the general approval of preachers and people. But these provisions did not overtake the real necessities of the case. What was needed was, that the Conference should be established as a legal consistory, in which it would be recognised in law as holding a joint guardianship with the various bodies of secular trustees over the estates of the Connexion in chapel and house property, with an undivided and inalienable power to appoint the itinerant preachers to the chapels. Without such a legal definement and investiture, the Conference would be in the eyes of the law a mere nullity, while the trustees would have the sole

power to appoint to or dismiss from the pulpit whom they would. In this state of things Mr. Wesley felt that the time was fully come to take some decisive measure which would set the matter upon a sure basis, and he accomplished it by the enrolment in Chancery of the famous "Deed of Declaration;" an instrument which defined the title of "the Conference of the People called Methodists" used in the settlement-deeds of the chapels, by the registration of the names of One Hundred preachers then living, and their investiture with the above powers, with instructions on the manner of filling up their places, when vacated by death or debility, from generation to generation.

In this important transaction Dr. Coke, acting under the direction of Mr. Wesley, took a most prominent part. In one particular, however, Wesley acted alone; in the choice, namely, of the hundred men, whose names he wrote with his own hand. Yet in this particular item of the business Coke was destined to find a cause of much vexation. Several of the preachers whose names had been omitted from the honourable list conceived that they owed this imaginary mark of disrespect to the influence of the Doctor; an opinion which, gaining ground among a multitude of the people who held those ministers in high esteem, subjected Dr. Coke to a great deal of unmerited obloquy. Mr. Wesley was not slow to exonerate him. At the first Conference after the Deed had been executed, the surmisings of the dissentients took the form of a charge against Coke. Mr. Wesley summed up his denial in the four words, "*Non vult, non potuit*:" "He is not the man to desire such a thing, nor could he do it if he would." He said afterwards, "In naming these preachers I had no adviser; but I simply set down those that according to the best of my judgment were most proper."

Dr. Coke, on his part, rendered a full explanation of the degree and manner in which he had been concerned in this great measure, by an "Address to the Methodist Society in Great Britain and Ireland," which not only cleared him from

these imputations, but tended to inform the minds of the people upon the nature and importance of a transaction so much talked of, but by many misunderstood.

“It has long been the grief of my mind,” says he, “that anything should exist among us which gives uneasiness to many of you, and will, if suffered to continue, be a ground for perpetual dissatisfaction, to the great hindrance of the work of God; I mean the power given to the Conference by the present mode of settling our preaching-houses. I have opened my mind to several of the most judicious of our preachers; men who have borne the heat and burden of the day; men of renown in our Israel: and they have with one voice advised me to lay before you the present plan of reconciliation. I shall, in the first place, relate the several steps by which the Deed which was enrolled in Chancery by our dear honoured father in the Gospel was set on foot and completed.

“In the Conference of 1782 several complaints were made in respect to the danger in which we were situated, from the want of specifying in distinct and legal terms what was meant by the term, ‘the Conference of the People called Methodists.’ Indeed, the preachers seemed universally alarmed, and many expressed their fears that divisions would take place among us, after the death of Mr. Wesley, on this account; and the whole body of preachers present seemed to wish that some methods might be taken to remove this danger.

“In consequence of this, (the subject lying heavy on my heart,) I desired Mr. Clulow, of Chancery-lane, London, to draw up such a case as I judged sufficient for the purpose, and to present it to that very eminent counsellor, Mr. Maddox, for his opinion. This was accordingly done; and Mr. Maddox informed us, in his answer, that the Deeds of our preaching-houses were in the situation we dreaded; that the law would not recognise the Conference in the state in which it stood at that time; and, consequently, that there was no central point which might preserve the Connexion from splitting into a thousand pieces after the death of Mr. Wesley. To

prevent this, he observed, that Mr. Wesley should enrol a Deed in Chancery, which Deed should specify the persons by name who composed the Conference, together with the mode of succession for perpetuity; and at the same time such regulations be established by the Deed as Mr. Wesley would wish the Conference should be governed by after his death.

“This opinion of Mr. Maddox I read in the Conference. The whole of them seemed grateful to me for procuring it, and expressed their wishes that such a Deed might be drawn up and executed by Mr. Wesley as should agree with the advice of that great lawyer, as soon as possible.

“Soon after the Conference Mr. Wesley authorized me to draw up, with the assistance of Mr. Clulow, all the leading parts of a Deed which should answer the above purposes. This we did with much care, and, as to myself, I can truly say, with fear and trembling; receiving Mr. Maddox’s advice in respect to every step, and laying the whole at Mr. Wesley’s feet for his approbation. There remained now nothing but to insert the names of those who were to constitute the Conference. Mr. Wesley then declared he would limit the number to one hundred. This was, indeed, contrary to my very humble opinion, which was that every preacher in full connexion should be a member of the Conference; and that admission into full connexion should be looked upon as admission into membership with the Conference. And I still believe it will be most for the glory of God, and the peace of our Zion, that the members of the Conference admit the other preachers who are in full connexion, and are present at the Conference, to a full vote on all occasions. However, of course, I submitted to the superior judgment and authority of Mr. Wesley. But I do publicly avow that I was not concerned in the limitation of the number, or the selection of the Hundred preachers.

“All things necessary being completed in the Court of Chancery, according to law, I thought it my duty to send copies of the Deed to all assistants of Circuits throughout Great Britain; and I afterwards carried copies of it to Ireland.”

The preceding pages will serve to give an idea of the engagements with which Dr. Coke was occupied during the first seven years of his union with the Methodist body. They were engagements which, in combination with the labours of his fathers and brethren in the same ministry, tended to consolidate and strengthen the religious life of that communion, and to prepare it for those grand enterprises of benevolence to the world at large by which its later history has been so graciously distinguished.

So went the years, vanishing in quick succession, but leaving behind the imperishable fruitage of well-spent days. Of those seven years, how few were the days not crowded with toil! In a letter of Dr. Coke's, at a remoter time, he tells his friend and "dear old schoolfellow," Walter Churchey, that for the last seventeen years he had never known what it was to have an hour to spare, and that scarcely a day had come in which he had found himself able to accomplish what appeared to be its necessary work.

He stood now upon the precincts of a yet wider sphere. He was to carry the benedictions of Christianity across the ocean, and to become, as the messenger of Providence and of Grace to the western continent, the organizer of a ministry which would bring the Gospel to bear, with saving as well as civilizing effect,

"On the vast tract which fronts the falling sun."

CHAPTER II.

OUTGOINGS OF THE GOSPEL.

To portray a man's true character, it is indispensable that we become acquainted so far as possible with his inward as well as outward life; ascertaining the springs of action which lay the deepest in his soul, his way of thinking, and the power and value of those ideas which gave out their reflection in the conduct of his life. The reader, then, will not deem the following chapter to be irrelevant in our biography. Doctor Coke was A MISSIONARY; and we cannot know him as he was, without entering into some details about the great cause for the promotion of which, with a zeal that from a living spark broke into an inextinguishable and towering flame, he was to live and die. What had been done hitherto in this work? Why had not the efforts of the church been more effective? What is the character of those revived movements in which Coke was enabled to take so distinguished a part? Let us, in order to get a better stand-ground for a proper estimate of his coming labours, take for a moment a retrospective glance at the past enterprises of the church for the evangelization of mankind.

When the fulness of the time had come, and God sent forth His Son, that great Missionary of truth and peace, to a world He would redeem, that world had long had opportunity enough to try the value of its own resources for solving the great problems of existence, and for self-release from the evils which in ever-growing magnitude oppressed it; but had found those resources unavailing, and had pronounced itself bankrupt of hope. Men of the most powerful intellect, with lives devoted to such researches, had given forth their hearts' convictions,

before ever the apostle wrote the words, that the world by its wisdom could not find the knowledge of God. The world's verdict on the worthlessness of its own unaided intelligence, in this high quest of truth, may be given in the terms of the Roman Varro, that "the human intellect wanders in a diseased delirium, and therefore it is not surprising that there is no possible folly which the philosophers had not at one time or another propounded as a lesson of wisdom;"—or in the conclusion arrived at by Aristotle, who brought his rigorous logic to bear upon them all, that "there is no difference between what men call knowledge and mere opinions; and therefore, as all opinion is uncertain, there can be no certainty in human knowledge;"—or in the sigh with which Anaxagoras concluded the studies of his youth and age, that "nothing can be known, nothing therefore can be learned, nothing can be certain: the senses are limited and delusive, intellect is weak, life is short." Plato, therefore, carried with him the assent of all the thinking men of his day, when he summed his own convictions and those of the great masters who had gone before him, in affirming that "if man was ever destined to know the Divine and the True, it must be by a revelation of the Deity."

That revelation came, in its fulness of grace and truth, upon the lips of the Incarnate God.

But while the world had thus been allowed full time to test the strength or nothingness of its own sufficiency, Providence had been all along preparing the way for Him who should come to dispel by His voice the shadows of ages, and to light us to salvation. A family had been set apart from the kindreds of mankind, and from it a nation called into being, to become a medium of revelation to all others. Sequestered from the Gentile world, they heard the voice of God, who put them in trust with His living oracles, to testify them as the ministrants of truth to a bewildered world. Of that wondrous people also, as concerning the flesh, it was decreed that He should arise, who, the Messiah of all nations, would redeem them. Meantime empire after empire rose and mouldered

into ruin, to make way for one which brought the civilized and the barbarian world beneath its iron but uniting sceptre. The Roman power combined and consolidated the hitherto dissevered elements of human society, by institutions that created a similarity of interests among nations remote and near; by laws which yet form the bases of our civil codes; by a language which lingers even to-day upon the lips of the learned of all lands; and by highways which, stretched in persevering lines through whole countries, brought the nations of three continents into civilizing communion. It was then, when the whole known world was thus prepared for the electric action of the Gospel, that its great realities began to be openly disclosed, and "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." But He who was in the form of God, and counted it no robbery to be equal with God, wore for a time the form of a servant, and became obedient to death. The sorrowful work He had come to fulfil lay at the foundation of His future royalty;—the cross, and then the crown. That the world, in the boundless future, might inherit an everlasting repose, the cause of evil must be grappled with at its root, and sin be expiated. He Himself became the victim, and by His offered life humanity was redeemed. And now, the ransom paid, the cross endured, and the grave for ever left behind, just ascending, to receive the worship of the celestial powers in the glory of the Father, He bound by His parting words of command and promise the law of evangelizing labour on the conscience of His disciples for successive generations: "Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature: Go, disciple all nations, baptizing them; and lo! I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." They went; and signs of mercy followed, wherever they appeared. Along those Roman highways the footsteps of apostles and evangelists sped on their angelic errand. Before that century had passed away, the civilized world had heard the Gospel; heard, and with such effect, that in the bosoms of millions of families that Gospel had won a throne which three

hundred years of slaughtering persecution could never overturn.

But then, in the inscrutable counsels of God, it was permitted that this hopeful renovation should undergo a check. Upon the genial spring-time of Christianity there came, in lurid mists, a poisonous and desolating blight. When the Roman emperor himself came forward, a proselyte of the faith which his predecessors had tried so hard to destroy, and when he gathered the hitherto suffering but steadfast church to the steps of his throne, to be invested with the fortunes and decked with the honours of the world, she lost the heavenly temper of her soul, forgot her heavenly Bridegroom and her only King, and made an earthly monarch her husband, and an earthly throne the place of her sanctuary. From that day the secular prevailed over the spiritual, the church became of the earth, earthy; the evangelic Jerusalem vanished out of sight, and the proud, portentous towers of a new Babylon loomed over the nations with disastrous shadows. Apostasy hastened its satanic work in the visible church, till its doctrines had become a lie,—its worship, profaned with creature-idolatry, had been rejected of heaven,—and the mediatorial angel at the altar above had cast the smoking censer on the ground.* Then was the man of sin revealed, the son of perdition, who exalteth himself above all that is worshipped, sitting in the temple of God, and showing himself that he is God. Under his truculent ban evangelical religion retired from the light; the true church, hidden in the wilderness, was like a thing unknown; and Truth itself, dressed in sackcloth, uttered her forlorn witness on her way to the flaming pile.

Meanwhile in the oriental countries the fair fields of Christianity had been desolated by the ravages of the Saracenic locusts. The religious and political condition of the world was favourable to the enterprise of a man like Mahomet. The day-glory of Rome had long ago set, and the feeble

* Apoc. viii.

twilight which yet glimmered in the Byzantine empire was fast giving place to an endless night. The power of Persia, too, was in its last stages of decadence. A universal degeneracy of manners had corrupted the mass of society, while, among the Eastern Christians, a multitude of minds had become by the action of controversy bewildered and doubtful of truth, and prepared to comply with any system which was made attractive by the inducements of carnal interest, or formidable by the terrors of oppression. But such was Mahometanism. Armed with a hideous and irresistible power, which gathered strength with each passing year, it inflicted a summary ruin on opposers, while it proffered repose from the conflicts of the mind, participation in the new causes of temporal prosperity, and the fruition of eternal pleasures in the life to come. So went the armies of Islam from victory to victory. With "hell behind" them, and "paradise before," and the inducements of rapine and indulgence to fill up the interim, they accomplished the predictions of the apocalyptic vision, and became the scourges of the Eastern world.

Now, in those times of universal darkness and depression, we are not surprised to observe an almost total inertness among professing Christians in upholding and fulfilling the great evangelizing law to tell the wide world of the salvation which is in Christ; or that, where the rulers of the church did put forth some efforts for the conversion of the heathen, they should have been efforts of an illegitimate character. Wishing to describe the development of missionary agencies, I must here of necessity advert to the latter; namely, the secular enterprises for the extension of Christianity in the Middle Ages.

When Charlemagne in the eighth century had reconstructed the empire of the West, he sought to extend the triumphs of the Christian name to the remotest confines of Europe. And, certainly, among the fair-haired Saxons, and the rude weather-beaten tribes of the north, he did effect a nominal change

of religion ; but only nominal, for, instead of being persuaded by the only true methods of kind and patient teaching, the uncultured multitude were induced to adopt the creed of the Church by lavish bribes, or compelled to be baptized by the overmastery of military conquerors. "The armies of the emperor were attended by priests and monks whose mission was to baptize the conquered, who, trembling at the resistless power of the invader, purchased safety for the moment by adopting the Christian name, and allowing churches and monasteries to be erected on their lands. But it was natural that Christianity coming to them in such a guise should not easily win their confidence. Vast numbers allowed themselves to be baptized only in pretence, resolving on the first opportunity to cast off the cloak they had been thus forced to assume ; and this was done when they again took arms against the Frankish kingdom." *

"Every battle of the warrior," says the prophet, "is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood." But, in the combats of the church with the powers of moral evil, the effectual forces must be such as can penetrate, illumine, and subdue the soul,—the light of truth, the power of conviction, the sovereign victory of love. Such were the weapons of the apostles' warfare, not carnal, but spiritual, mighty through God ; but these were now wanting.

The same remark will apply to the stupendous enterprises subsequently undertaken for the re-establishment of Christianity in the East. In those most questionable undertakings, army after army left the shores of Europe, to be broken before the powers of the Moslem like waves beating against an unshaken rock. It had been the hope of the Roman pontiff, and the monarchs who lent him their support, that by these crusades Christianity would be propagated among the Mahometans, and whole nations be gathered into the Church. But it was seen once more, that they who in such a cause take

* Neander, vol. v., p. 97.

the sword will perish by it. Not yet was come the foredoomed hour for the downfall of Islam; and the hopes of those brighter days then thought to be at hand, when the Crescent must fade and the Cross be ascendant, died away in the gathering of a heavier gloom.

Of the like illegitimate character were the various orders of knighthood, which rose organized into activity shortly after those terrible lessons had been inculcated by Providence in vain. The proud Templars with snow-white mantles emblazoned with the cross, the swarthy cavaliers of Spain under tutelage of St. James of Compostella, and the more formidable Teutonic knights of Northern Germany, rode forth in bannered hosts to regenerate the followers of Mahomet, or the Gothic pagans of the colder European lands, not with the Book of peace and the loving persuasions of the Gospel, but the glittering swords of Damascus and the levelled lances of the warrior. These men came like dark clouds upon the hamlets of the unoffending heathen, and roused all the demons of strife and murder:—

“ Loud the shrieks of battle roar,
Streaming down the hollow wind;
War and slaughter go before,
Want and death are left behind.”

But was this the way to heal the wounds of human life, and to save men's souls from ignorance and sin? Shall the church of the merciful Saviour be reared upon the ruins of burning towns, or the temple of the living God be builded with the ghastly corpses of the murdered dead?

From these repulsive and now exploded methods of propagating the religion of Jesus Christ, we turn with relief to another class of undertakings, which, though not thoroughly true in all things to the apostolic ideal, were nevertheless partially evangelic, and in some degree beneficially successful.

Such were the labours of the early missionaries of the British and Saxon Churches of our own country. When Christianity in the first century was planted in England, it

grew into a tree whose leaves are destined to heal the nations. Earnests of this great result began soon to unfold themselves; and from the cloisters of Bangor, Iona, and other British shrines, the truth went forth on the lips of those missionary bishops to be heard and received by the benighted populations of Ireland across one channel, and those across the other from Brittany to the shores of the Baltic. The names of some of those men of God, as Patrick, Galus, Winfred, Columbanus, and others, are yet sacred in many of the continental neighbourhoods whose rude forefathers heard, in their voice, the law of liberty.

Still more remarkable were the missions of the Nestorian Church in the East. That venerable communion, deriving its descent from the apostolic days, maintained for ages, amid the progressive decline of oriental Christianity, and the growing domination of Mahometanism, the leading doctrines of the faith once delivered to the saints, and, with indefatigable zeal, endeavoured to plant them far and wide among the surrounding nations. They laboured for this purpose not only in Syria and Persia, where they themselves were indigenious, but abroad in India, China, and among the savage Tartar tribes inhabiting the remoter deserts of Asia. Their priests and bishops went out on this work in sustained succession, and their work was not in vain. Gibbon, though himself no friend to the religion of Jesus, has inscribed his tribute of admiration for the zeal of those olden missionaries, who, traversing deserts and seas to bring lost men to their Saviour, "pursued without fear the steps of the roving Tartar, insinuated themselves into the camps of the valley of Imaus, entered China by the port of Canton, and were found as well on the spice-bearing coast of Malabar, and the isles of the ocean, Socotora and Ceylon." The Nestorian missions fell into decay with the extensive ruin which came upon that Church by the persecutions and wars of Jengis Khan and Tamerlane.

Then, among these imperfectly evangelic agencies, we must not omit all reference to the mongrel efforts of the Romish

Church. That communion has been always more or less active in disseminating Christianity, according to its own idea of it. So Gregory the Great, in the sixth century, dispatched Augustine to England, with a train of missionary monks, to convert a people who already knew much more of the true Gospel than these volunteer teachers; and they succeeded too well, by the force of treachery and stratagem, to overcome the long faithful resistance of British presbyters and their people to the dominating power of the Italian bishop, and to transform one of the purest Christian communities to the model of the world-church on the Roman hills. And when, in after-days, the Reformation had begun to shake that Babylonish structure to its basis, and the need was felt at the Vatican of an agency that should meet the wants of the tottering Papacy, the Propaganda was established in the eternal city, and the sublime fanatic, Ignacio Loyola, founded that tremendous order which, under the name of the Society of Jesus, has ever since been exercising, visibly or invisibly, in darkness or in daylight, in the courts of kings, the colleges of learning, the mansions of the great, or the dwellings of the poor, so potent an influence among almost all the nations of the earth.

The *Congregatio de Propagandâ Fide* was instituted by Pope Urban in 1622, with the object of disseminating the principles of Romanism throughout the habitable globe, and of gathering all nations into the Papal fold. Its machinery by steady application has become, as we may say, cosmopolitan. At its central school all the languages of the earth are studied; its printing-presses have types in all the alphabets of human literature, and its missionaries are found to-day in all the many-peopled world.

The three chief ecclesiastical orders devoted to the missionary work are the Franciscans, Dominicans, and Jesuits. The Dominicans, however, have devoted their energies mainly to the repression of heresy. The thumbscrew, chain and rack, and blazing pile, are the favourite apparatus with which these

reverend fathers have carried on their labour of love. If it cannot be told of them that they have ever saved a soul, the annals of their order, written in blood, give attestation too sure that they have destroyed men's lives by myriads; and their very name, reeking with blood and brimstone, sends a shudder through the bosom of humanity. The Franciscans are more *bond fide* missionaries, and, together with the Jesuits, are still most zealous in compassing sea and land to make proselytes. Of the general character of the Jesuits I need say nothing. Men know them by their fruits. Loyola, indeed, the founder of the order, appears to have been a sincere man, mistaken, fanatical, probably insane. He did not foresee the mass of villany which his measures would contribute to produce. Some of his first companions, also, were sincere enthusiasts in the cause to which they consecrated, with awful vows, their body, soul, and life. Such a man was Xavier, who with indefatigable zeal spread what he knew of the truth through wide regions of the East, baptized thousands of the heathen, and then, on his solitary way to China, died, in the forty-sixth year of his age, upon an island in the Indian Ocean.

The Papal missionaries have been zealous agents of Catholicism, but very poor evangelists of Christianity. Nor to the latter character have they, indeed, made much pretension. The Gospel they have preached is hardly worthy of the name: on the other hand, to conciliate the heathen, they have not scrupled to tamper with heathenism, and to debase the religion of Christ by mixing it up with the practices of the kingdom of darkness. They have given, by wholesale baptisms, the name of Catholics to large masses of uninstructed pagans, and left them without any knowledge of Christian truth. This has been acknowledged by some of the Catholic historians. Thus the Spaniard Oviedo, speaking of the 40,000 Indians baptized by the friar Bobadilla in South America, says indignantly, "I will make a proposition: Take all the Indians who have been baptized in the country. I will give

a peso of gold for every one of them who knows his baptismal name, the Lord's prayer, and the principal articles of faith, if they will pay me only a maravedi for each of them who cannot do it. What is the use of baptizing the Indians, and then leaving them to their superstitions and vices?"

It appears that on the days of baptism the poor creatures were brought down to the river in the mass, and baptized, a battalion at a time, by swinging a broom dipped in the water over the whole of them at once, the same name being given to each of them. Oviedo states that one person usually became godfather for 100 or 500 persons at a time; and that in St. Domingo the natives were baptized without so much as a question being put to them whether they knew what was meant by the act.

Humboldt, whom no one will charge with detraction or narrow-mindedness, has recorded his conviction that "the introduction of Catholicism has produced no other effect upon the Indians of Mexico than to substitute new ceremonies for the old ones; and that even this change was the effect of constraint, and not of persuasion." "Doctrine," says he, "has not succeeded doctrine, but ceremony to ceremony. The natives know nothing of religion but the external forms. Fond of such things, they find in the Roman religion peculiar enjoyments: festivals, fireworks, processions, dances, and whimsical disguises, are a fertile source of amusement to them. Everywhere the Catholic rites have assumed the shade of the country where they have been transplanted. So it is in the Philippine islands, and among the Malays; and in the province of Pasto on the ridge of the Cordillera of the Andes, I have seen Indians, masked and adorned with small tinkling bells, perform savage dances around the altar, while a monk of St. Francis elevated the Host."

So it was in days past; and so, upon indubitable evidence, is it still. We are in possession of facts of recent date which show that the present generation of mission-priests have not much improved upon the manners of their predecessors. The

stream never rises higher than the fountain: moreover, the same fountain, the same water. But, if these men are thus at work throughout the world, let the Reformed religion have its agencies as widely spread, that the world may be gathered to Christ, and not to Antichrist.

Let us, then, direct our glances to the brighter side, to discover if there is reason to hope for the more real evangelization of the world by that revived exhibition of the Divine Gospel which commenced at the Reformation, and with renewed impulses in our own day becomes wider and more potent each year of time. The Reformation was an epoch in the moral history of the world. The gloom which ages of apostasy had accumulated over Christendom began then to break away, amid the shakings of the intellectual and political world. It was then that in the gorgeous language of the Apocalypse, where the prophecy treats of that very subject,* the mighty angel came down from heaven clothed with a cloud, and the rainbow about his head, and his face as the sun, having in his hand AN OPEN BOOK: (for not only human learning was wonderfully revived at that time, but the BIBLE threw open its pages to the people's eyes:)—and when he cried, seven thunders uttered their voice; when the sounds of God's word were heard, whole nations awoke with the alarm, and mighty movements shook the civilized world. Whereupon, in the vision, follows the re-construction of the church, the measurement of the temple of God, the resurrection of the witnesses of the truth, who had some time lain prostrate as the silent dead; and then, behold, another angel spreads his wings, and flies forth in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel TO PREACH to all the dwellers on the earth.

The Italian historian, Muratori, writing on the missionary zeal displayed by the Romish communion, says, that "this heroic charity is peculiar only to the Catholic Church; that

* Chap. x., xi.

no vestige of it appears among the various sects of heretics," (as he terms the Protestants,) "because the flame of the Holy Spirit burns only in the breast of the true legitimate Spouse of Christ, which is the apostolic Roman Church." * We know very well what facts may be brought face to face with this statement. It is true that a century has passed since Muratori died; but even in his time Protestant missions were carried on upon so extensive a scale as to show that, when he wrote those words, the annalist was either shamefully ignorant or culpably untrue.

Only nine years after the death of Luther the church of Geneva organized a systematic agency, in sending out fourteen missionaries for the benefit of the North American Indians. The Huguenots of France also had like stirrings of heart, and began to gratify them by sending two missionaries to South America. But they were themselves struggling for existence, and were not permitted to carry out these longings, by reason of the bloody persecutions which overwhelmed them.

But in our own country the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel was founded under more tranquil auspices, and has continued to do good service ever since; and in 1669 it was supplemented by the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge, the operations of which have long been attended with various measures of success. The Nonconformists, too, entered upon the work according to their ability; and among the men sent out by them was the saintly Eliot, the "apostle of the Indians," who not only preached the Gospel with good effect among the red tribes of the forest, but translated the Scriptures into their language.

It should also be stated to their honour that the kings of Sweden and Denmark, in the early part of the

* *Cerchesi pure fra le sette di moderni eretici, non vi si trovera questa specie di eroica carita: ma questo nobil ardore non si puo aspettar altronde, che da quel Divin Spirito ilquale infiamma al bene i cuori di fedeli, nè trovarsi altrove che nella vera chiesa di Dio, &c.*

last century, made several good efforts both for the spiritual welfare of the Finns and Laplanders, and among the Hindoos in the Danish settlements in India. The Dutch also attempted the same duty in their colonies of Batavia and Sumatra.

The labours of the Moravians in the great field of the heathen world began almost as soon as they had become settled as a communion a hundred and thirty years ago. The present Moravian Church is descended from that of the Bohemian Brethren, who, under Huss and other martyrs, testified the truth in the east of Europe an age before Luther did in Germany. The Bohemian Church derived its ordinations from that of the Waldensians, who can trace theirs back to the early times of Christianity. So that the Moravians, as to ancestorship, are of a noble and apostolic descent; and they have shown themselves worthy of it by their doctrines and their deeds. Their grand doctrine is set forth in the well-chosen and glorious words, that "by the sacrifice for sin made by Jesus Christ, and by that alone, grace and deliverance from sin are to be obtained for all mankind." And they have proved it, too, by their apostolic spirit. To the utmost of their power, they have gone forth among the nations to testify the Gospel of the grace of God. When, in 1731, they were themselves only a poor community of suffering exiles, numbering merely six hundred souls, such was the sacred impulse to missionary labour which moved them, that within the short period of ten years their messengers had gone to St. Thomas, to St. Croix, to Surinam, and Berbice; to the Indians in the forests and the Greenlanders on the icy mountains of North America, and to the Negro slaves in South Carolina; to Lapland and Tartary, to Algiers and the Guinea shores, to the Cape of Good Hope and to Ceylon. In short, one man among every fifty members became a missionary. Some of them who laboured among the slaves were willing to become slaves, to have access to the miserable beings whom they had come to convert and console. They have now more than

1500 missionaries,* with a great number of schools, and 50 printing-presses. Among the 180,000 reclaimed heathens in Christian communion with them, the greater number are gathered from the most wretched tribes of the human race. For it is a distinguishing feature of the Moravian missions, that, like those of their cousins, the Methodists, their labours have been mainly directed abroad to the tribes on the extreme verge of civilization, or rather of barbarism; the very outcasts of humanity; the frozen Greenlander, the savage Esquimaux, the oppressed Negro, and the brute-like Hottentot in his den.

Such was the imperfect and inadequate condition of missionary enterprise at that epoch in the life of our evangelist at which we are now arrived. The reader who is familiar with the great institutions of our own time under the names of the Church, the Baptist, London, Scottish, and Methodist Missionary Societies, not to mention those carried on by the French and German churches, must please to recollect that none of these organizations had then an existence. How far the example and efforts of Doctor Coke led to the formation of any or of all of them, will be seen by the review of his history when complete.† All that we affirm now is, that he was their precursor and pioneer. He led the way of a host of Christian evangelists, who, since he went down beneath the waves of the Indian Ocean, have made known in so many regions of the earth the unsearchable riches of Christ. To him, and the noble bands who followed him, the almost prophetic words of Fenelon in his famous sermon for the missions of his own Church may be applied without a misgiving:—“Love outstrips pride. Neither burning sands, nor mountains, nor inhospitable deserts; neither remote distances, nor

* This number includes some females.

† A sermon preached by Dr. Coke at Birmingham first directed the attention of that holy man, the Rev. Samuel Pearce, to the state of the heathen. The Baptist Missionary Society was formed shortly after, into the objects of which he entered with the most devoted interest. See the *Life of Pearce* by Andrew Fuller.

tempests, nor the hidden rocks of so many seas; neither unhealthy climes, nor the fatal heat of the equator where a new sky reveals itself, nor hostile fleets, nor barbarian coasts, can arrest those whom God sends forth. Who are they that fly as the clouds? Winds, convey them on your wings! Let the south, let the east, let unknown isles, in silent wonder see them coming from afar. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them who bring glad tidings, who publish salvation, who say unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! Behold these new conquerors, who come with no arms but the cross of Christ; who come, not to seize the wealth or shed the blood of the vanquished, but to shed their own, and to communicate the treasures of heaven.

“Ye nations, willing to receive the Gospel, how great must be your surprise! Men come to you undrawn by motives of ambition or curiosity. Men who had never seen you quit everything on your account, and go to seek you through all seas, toils, and perils, to impart to you that eternal life which has been revealed to them. Nations, wrapped in the shadow of death, lo, the light dawns upon your heads.”

CHAPTER III.

THE RISE OF METHODISM IN AMERICA.

THE original English colonists on the western continent, with continual accessions from the land of their fathers, had grown into a great nationality. That spirit of enterprise and effort which gives its character to the Anglo-Saxon race had already changed vast regions of the transatlantic world from a wilderness to a fruitful land. Its mighty rivers were rendered the highways of commerce, and its solemn sequestered forests, disappearing before the axe and the plough, gave place to fields and gardens, comfortable villages, rising towns, and here and there the domes and towers of majestic cities. The people, holding as yet allegiance to the English crown, were considered, in a religious point of view, to be still a branch of the Established Church of the mother country, though a large proportion of them followed the traditions and usages of the "Pilgrim Fathers" of Nonconformity. But in each communion, unless roused now and then by a revival like that which has been so well described by President Edwards, the state of religion among them had sunk deplorably low. Many of the Nonconformist congregations were wavering on the brink of heresy, while in the Episcopal Church the flame of real religion had almost entirely died away.

At intervals between the year 1738 and the close of his glorious career in 1770, Whitefield had often made a deep impression on the minds of thousands upon thousands in America by the force of his heart-stirring ministry; but the labours of that great man were attended by a result com-

paratively ephemeral, not being followed up by a systematic endeavour to embody his converts by church-organization; a defect which Divine Providence most graciously supplied by the agency of what has taken the name of Wesleyanism. Like Christianity itself, that agency, whose consequences rise before the world in the massive grandeur of the Methodist Episcopal Church of America, was first developed on that side of the ocean in very lowly circumstances. To trace them to their origin would take us to an obscure unheard-of hamlet in the west of Ireland called Court Mattress, where a colony of Germans from the Palatinate had settled in the time of Queen Anne. These people, with no religious attentions, had degenerated into almost utter heathenism, till visited by the early itinerants of Methodism, when they became as exemplary for their good conduct as they had been notorious for profanity. Mr. Wesley, who loved to turn aside and preach in their large home-built chapel whenever in that part of the country, says that a neighbourhood so distinguished for good morals could hardly be found elsewhere in England or Ireland. One of these German-Irishmen, Philip Embury by name, he licensed as a local preacher. This young man some years after* emigrated with several of his neighbours to New-York. There, unhappily, both he and they relaxed from the religious life. About five years after, another body of emigrants, some of them friends and neighbours of the first party, followed them to the same place, and among them an elderly Christian matron named Barbara Heck. She, solemnly alive to the concerns of salvation, "was greatly grieved to find that Embury and the other Methodists who had been some time in America had almost wholly given up their religious profession, and were following the follies of the world. At length, on one occasion she went into a room where several of these, with Embury among them, were assembled, and some of them engaged playing a game of cards. Seeing this, she

* Anno 1760.

instantly seized the cards and threw them into the fire; and, turning to Embury, she reproved him for his unfaithfulness, and said, 'You must preach to us, or we shall all go to hell together, and God will require our blood at your hands.' This sharp appeal to his conscience roused the unfaithful Embury to a sense of duty; but, as if unwilling to yield at once to the power of truth, he replied, 'I cannot preach, for I have neither house nor congregation;' to which the old lady answered, 'Preach in your own house, and to our own company.' Not being able to resist the upbraidings of his conscience, and the reproofs of this mother in Israel, he complied with her request, and soon after delivered the first Methodist sermon ever preached in America to a congregation of five persons in his own hired house." *

A press of hearers soon overcrowding the private home, a large room was engaged; and Divine service, with the preaching of the Gospel, was attended by increasing numbers. One day, while engaged in their devotions, these humble worshippers were "surprised and disconcerted by the appearance of a British officer in uniform. At first they feared he was come to disturb, and perhaps to prohibit, their meeting in this manner; but their fears were soon dispelled." They saw him fall down with them in prayer, and then listen, with evident enjoyment, to the truth delivered in the sermon. This military man was Lieutenant Webb, who had been converted under Wesley at Bristol, and had been appointed by his father in the Gospel a local preacher. On coming into quarters at Albany, he had lately heard of the little flock of Methodists in New-York, and rested not till he had found them. Entering with all his heart into this work, the lieutenant by his preaching attracted fresh crowds; some, from the novelty of seeing a military man in the pulpit; and others, won by the intelligence, piety, and generous zeal of the man himself. So the truth made its way: the large room got too small; a

* Smith, vol. i., p. 381.

larger one, "a rigging-loft," underwent the same process; then, two years after, was dedicated "the first American Methodist chapel; and thus was founded that form of Methodism which was destined to become, within the lifetime of many then born, the predominant Protestant belief of the new world from Newfoundland to California." *

Captain Webb laboured extensively in Long Island and other parts of the State with great effect; and to him also belongs the honour of founding the Methodist cause in the city of Philadelphia. Simultaneously with these movements, Mr. Strawbridge, another emigrant from Ireland, began to preach in Maryland, where, at Pipe-Creek, a "log meeting-house" was built, within whose timbered walls some of the early Conferences were afterwards held. Along with Mr. Strawbridge's name should be joined that of Mr. Williams, a local preacher from England, who, with a memorandum from Mr. Wesley, authorizing him to preach under the direction of his missionaries, did good service in the south-east of Virginia. Under Strawbridge's preaching was converted a man who made a great figure in the first half-century of American Methodism,—Freeborn Garrettson. Indeed, among the people who found salvation many became witnesses of the truth to others; and in the unsettled migratory life of the colonists, the Gospel, embodied in their homely testimony, had a more extensive circulation. Like the primitive Christians we read of in the Acts of the Apostles, they who were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word. The consequence was, that when, in answer to their urgent appeals, Mr. Wesley, in 1769, sent them two regular missionary ministers, Messrs. Boardman and Pilmoor, they found in Philadelphia a Society of a hundred members, another considerable flock at New-York, with a chapel containing seventeen hundred persons, who formed but a third of the congregation, as two-thirds more were "glad to hear

* Stevens, vol. i., p. 333.

without ;” and in several other places a willing and waiting audience, a people prepared of the Lord.

The following year two other ministers arrived from England, Francis Asbury and Richard Wright. ASBURY ! This man of God, whose name is now revered all over the States of America, and wherever in our own country his history is known, was now in his twenty-sixth year. He had already travelled some time in England. When his foot pressed the shores of the western world, he took the first step in a forty-four years’ career of wondrous labour, which ended but with life. We shall refer to him hereafter with greater advantage by remarking here, that this patriarch of American Methodism died in 1816, in his seventy-first year. Steadfast in hope, joyful in tribulation, and continuing instant in prayer, he had lived a life of unremitting toil in the towns, villages, and wildernesses, north, south, and west of the transatlantic lands, preaching daily, and travelling on an average six thousand miles a year. The wolf, the Indian, the swamp, the rushing river, the mountain precipice, the perilous accidents of flood or forest, never discomposed him. Illness itself but rarely interrupted his efforts. He notes in one place in his journal, “I have travelled about six hundred miles with an inflammatory fever, and a fixed pain in my breast.” To preach his last sermon, he was carried to the pulpit. He was a bishop of the true apostolic school. In person tall, spare, humbly but neatly clad, his whole appearance answered to that ideal. From shaggy overhanging brows his eyes sent their glances with an awakening effect to his hearers’ hearts ; and his voice, when moved with strong emotion, had a power like thunder. Yet, withal, he had a gentleness which made the little children in the log-hut climb his knees to learn how to be good, and to find the blessing of the Saviour in whose name he blessed them ; and the veterans of the forest to love him as a brother, a father, and a friend. He moved much among them, adapting his services to the wants of the wide-spread nomadic population, as well as to those of the denizens of towns and

cities. A life so devoted debarred him from the indulgences of the domestic state, and never permitted him to marry. Simple in his habits, the salary he derived from the church, beyond the defrayment of his travelling expenses, seldom exceeded twenty pounds a year; yet from this poor pittance he contrived to relieve the destitute and comfort the sick. In doing this he parted with his watch, and (shall I say it?) with the very shirt from his back. Some friend left him a legacy of two thousand dollars: he devoted it to the relief of the more necessitous of his brethren. When invested with the episcopal office, he made full proof of that high trust by an administration impartial, sagacious, and effective, which directed the ever-growing energies of the Methodist communion in America towards those grand results with which his name will be enwreathed in all ages to come.

Some of the last words traced by his hand are these: "My soul is blessed with continued consolation and peace, in all my great weakness of body and crowds of company. I am a debtor to the whole continent, but more especially to the north-east and south-west. I have visited the south thirty times. I wish to visit the Mississippi, but am resigned. My eyes fail. I will resign the stations to Bishop M'Kendree. It is the fifty-fifth year of my ministry, and forty-fifth of labour in America. I die daily, but my consolations are great. I live in God, from moment to moment."

In presence of excellence like this, we presume not to make a needless comment. The great and good of Jesus Christ's true hierarchy need no words of praise from us. But they who are conversant with the annals of the American Methodist Church can tell already of a succession of men like-minded. Our space obliges us reluctantly to abstain from the stirring recital, and revert to the point from which we have digressed. We were telling how the toils of the first preachers had such a prolific return. Congregations were collected, and societies formed far and widely; but, in the zealous labour of breaking up the vast fallow grounds that opened to their enterprise,

these busy labourers did not or could not attend so much to the establishment of Methodistic discipline as the perpetuity of their work made necessary. Among the anomalies of their practice, the administration of the sacraments by the preachers seems to have given particular concern to Mr. Wesley,* who wished that Methodism in America should stand in the same relation to the Established Church which it had hitherto ostensibly held in England; namely, as an association of societies in communion with the Church. To settle these matters upon a more regular and (according to his idea) Methodistic basis, he commissioned two other preachers, Messrs. Rankin and Shadford, to proceed to America, with special authority to act in his name in such affairs of discipline as should require their interference. They arrived in June, 1773, and in the following month convened the first Conference in the city of Philadelphia. The shape which the sacramental question took in this assembly appears from the following minute:—"1. Ought not the authority of Mr. Wesley, and that of the (English) Conference, to extend to the preachers and people in America? Ans. Yes.—2. Ought not the doctrine and discipline of the Methodists, as contained in the Minutes, to be the sole rule of our conduct who labour in the Connexion with Mr. Wesley in America? Ans. Yes.—3. If so, does it not follow that if any preachers deviate from the Minutes we can have no fellowship with them, till they change their conduct? Ans. Yes." Hereupon it was resolved that there should be a unity of practice, as to the sacraments, with that followed by the English Societies.

But this decision to abstain from the administration of the ordinances in their own chapels was one which, from the necessities of the scattered population, did not carry the hearty consent of some of the preachers; and the time soon came when, from the breaking up of many of the parochial church congregations, on being abandoned by their clergy, it became a moral

* This was before the American Revolution, which dissolved all union with the Established Church of England.

obligation to annul it. For now great changes were at hand. The political heavens grew dark with portentous storms, and those grand convulsions began their terrible work by which the American States were rent from the British empire. Into the details of the revolutionary war it is not our province to enter. We have only to note, that the distracted state of society at large during those melancholy years was most unfriendly to the interests of religion, and for a time the operations of the Methodist ministers were all but suspended. The English preachers in America, sympathizing with Mr. Wesley in his thorough opposition to the revolutionary movement, became objects of popular odium, and were obliged, in peril of their lives, to return to England. Mr. Asbury alone remained; but, being unwilling, till the public recognition of the independence of the United States by the British Government, to give in his open allegiance to his adopted country, he was constrained himself to retire for a time from notice. He found an asylum in the house of Mr. White, a magistrate in the state of Delaware; keeping close by day, but doing such evangelic and pastoral work as lay within his power, under cover of the night. Meantime the more decidedly American agencies continued in operation, so far as the distractions of the times would permit.

CHAPTER IV

ORGANIZATION OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
IN AMERICA.

AT length the struggle was over, and the Atlantian Republic took its place among the powers of the world. In this momentous change strong ties had been loosed, and a multitude of political interests had vanished with the British flag. But with the advent of peace came perfect amity. King George the Third, in receiving the newly-appointed minister of the United States, said all in a word: "I was the last man in the kingdom to acknowledge your independence, and I will be the last to violate it." And it was now to be seen how Christianity can heal the wounds which war inflicts on the social life of man, and remedy the injuries of estrangement by the influence of its reconciling faith. The disastrous shadows which gather over the work of the destroying sword had gone away now that it was sheathed. Then spake the genius of Religion: "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away." *

In truth, the people of the United States just then needed especial religious help. Strong as they had proved themselves in achieving their national independence, the strife by which it had been won had not only impoverished for a time

* Song of Solomon, ii. 10-13.

their financial resources, but had left many a hearth in desolation, and many an altar in ruin. On that side of the ocean "the Church of England" had ceased to be. The clergy, steadfast in their allegiance to the throne of their fatherland, had retired before the tempests of the war, and the people of their charge were left as flocks without a shepherd. The Methodist Societies, now become numerous in the country, dependent, as we have seen, upon the services of these clergymen for the canonical ordinances, were thus deprived of both sacraments. They had lost the means of grace in the Episcopal Church, and were only admissible to those of the Presbyterian communions by the abandonment of their own. In this state of things, without so much as baptism for their children, who will wonder that the preachers as well as people became impatient of the restraints which, under the by-gone dispensation, they had consented to endure in deference to Mr. Wesley, and that a number of them, with an ordination of their own, proceeded to administer the holy rites? Mr. Asbury, who had never swerved in his predilections for the episcopal theory, succeeded only for a time in retarding an issue which he saw at length to be inevitable. The wants of the people, stronger with each year, became more potent than the decrees of the mediæval Church, and spoke with an appeal which might no more be disregarded.

Mr. Wesley meantime had been revolving this problem with anxious thought, and outpoured supplication for the grace of the Holy Spirit of God, to know and to do the will Divine. He understood the gravity of the case, and was aware that the step it appeared necessary to take would open a pathway for the feet of countless generations. One thing was plain,—that the altered condition of the American States released him from all misgiving as to the lawfulness of the separation of American Methodism from the Established Church. There remained no such Church to be separated from. The question was, Should the people be debarred from church-privileges? And, if the dictates of revelation and humanity were to be

obeyed in affording them those privileges, it must next be determined what should be the type and character of the ecclesiastical order to be introduced among them. And to him the convictions and habits of his whole life could give but one response: It must be *episcopal*, if not in title, yet in essence and operation. It should be observed, however, that the sentiments of this pre-eminent divine on the subject of Episcopacy had long been more in harmony with the simple ideal of it indicated in the apostolic writings, than with the conventional circumstances with which the theory has been modified in the lapse of ages. It had ever been Mr. Wesley's principle in all researches of this kind, "*accedere ad fontes atque haurire*,"—to approach the original sources of knowledge, and learn the things of God from the words of God. So, in his investigations on the scriptural characteristics of the Christian ministry, his well-read Greek Testament showed him nothing more plainly than that in the apostolic time the episcopal office had a presbyterian basis; that a presbyter was co-ordinate with a bishop; and that any presbyter, if the exigencies of the church absolutely required it, was fully eligible to the exercise of the highest episcopal functions. These, with Wesley, were not opinions embraced for the current occasion, but the long-established convictions of his mind, to which he had given free expression nine-and-twenty years before in his Notes* on the New Testament. Assured, then, and certain, that, as a presbyter of the Church, he himself was in possession of this scriptural prerogative, he had no hesitation in meeting the strong requirement of the time to carry it into exercise. In the Rev. Dr. Coke Mr. Wesley recognised a man whom he judged to be fully qualified to co-operate with him in this great measure; and to him he now

* For example: On Acts xx. 17: "*Sending to Ephesus, he called the elders of the church.* These are called bishops in the 28th verse."—On Phil. i. 1: "*With the bishops and deacons.* The word bishops here includes all the presbyters at Philippi, as well as the ruling presbyters; the names bishop and presbyter being promiscuously used in the first ages."

resolved to commit the charge of organizing the Methodist Church in America upon the sure and everlasting basis of the apostolic prescriptions.

It was in February, 1784, that Mr. Wesley, in his study at City-road, first divulged his purpose to Doctor Coke. He stated to him, that "as the revolution in America had separated the United States from the mother country for ever, and the episcopal establishment was utterly abolished, the Societies had been represented to him as in a most deplorable condition: That an appeal had also been made to him through Mr. Asbury, in which he was requested to provide for them some mode of church-government suited to their exigencies; and that, having long and seriously revolved the subject in his thoughts, he intended to adopt the plan which he was now about to unfold: That as he had invariably endeavoured, in every step he had taken, to keep as closely to the Bible as possible, so on the present occasion he hoped he was not about to deviate from it: That, keeping his eye upon the primitive churches in the ages of unadulterated Christianity, he had much admired the mode of ordaining bishops which the Church of Alexandria had practised: (To preserve its purity, that Church would never suffer the interference of a foreign bishop in any of their ordinations; but the presbyters, on the death of a bishop, exercised the right of ordaining another from their own body; and this practice continued among them for two hundred years, till the days of Dionysius:) And, finally, that, being himself a presbyter, he wished Dr. Coke to accept [such episcopal] ordination at his hands, and to proceed in that character to the continent of America, to superintend the Societies in the United States." *

To this great innovation upon Church of England order Dr. Coke certainly did not feel himself, at first, at liberty to accede. A writer in the *Quarterly Review* † affirms that it was Coke

* So Mr. Drew, (*Life*, page 62,) who probably received the statement from Dr. Coke himself.

† See Note 9.

who first requested Wesley to make him a bishop, and send him as such to America. The opposite is the truth: the request came from Wesley, and took Coke by surprise. He had not even given the clerical question involved in the project any serious consideration; and he first required of Mr. Wesley some time for investigation, before he could express with confidence an opinion upon it at all. He now applied himself to those biblical and patristic studies which bear upon the subject; and after the lapse of two months, spent partly in Scotland, communicated to Mr. Wesley, that the conclusions at which he had arrived enabled him without any hesitation to concur with himself as to the abstract lawfulness of the measure which had been propounded.

Yet still, (and this shows that he was neither the man to initiate the project, nor eager to enter upon it when proposed to him by another,) he was of opinion that some intermediate measures should be taken before anything more decisive was attempted. This appears from a letter I have before me, written from "Near Dublin, April 17th," in which he says to Mr. Wesley:—"If some one, in whom you could place the fullest confidence, and whom you think likely to have sufficient influence, and prudence, and delicacy of conduct, for the purpose, were to go over and return, you would then have a source of sufficient information to determine on any points or propositions. You may very probably survive me; and I may also be destitute of the last-mentioned essential qualifications: (to the former, indeed, I will lay claim without reserve:)—otherwise the possibility of my surviving you would render my taking such a voyage expedient. Besides, if we both live here below for many years,—1st, That you might have fuller information concerning the state of the country and the Societies than epistolary correspondence can give you; 2ndly, That there may be a cement of union remaining after your death between the Societies and preachers in the two countries; and, 3rdly, Because (if the awful event of your death should happen before my removal to the world

of spirits) it is almost certain, for many reasons, that I should have business enough of indispensable importance on my hands in these kingdoms." Mr. Wesley, however, thought that the time was come to take immediate steps rather than any further preliminary action, and the Doctor thereupon placed himself unreservedly at his service.

At Leeds, in the following July, the measure was laid before the Conference. Mr. Fletcher took part in the deliberations, and fully concurred in the affirmative resolution then confirmed. Dr. Coke was requested to meet Mr. Wesley shortly after in Bristol, to make the final arrangements for carrying it into effect. In the interim Mr. Wesley received from the Doctor expressions of his own views of the manner in which this should be done, some paragraphs of which I will transcribe:—

"The more maturely I consider the subject, the more expedient it seems to me that the power of ordaining others should be received by me from you, by the imposition of your hands; and that you should lay hands on Brother Whatcoat and Brother Vasey, for the following reasons:—1. It seems to me the most scriptural way, and most agreeable to the practice of the primitive churches. 2. I may want all the influence in America which you can throw into my scale. Mr. Brackenbury informed me at Leeds that he saw a letter in London from Mr. Asbury, in which he observed 'that he should not receive any person deputed by you to take any part of the superintendency of the work invested in him,'—or words that implied so much. I do not find the least degree of prejudice in my mind against Mr. Asbury; on the contrary, a very great love and esteem: and I am determined not to stir a finger without his consent, unless sheer necessity obliges me; but rather to lie at his feet in all things. But as the journey is long, and you cannot spare me often, and it is well to provide against all events, and an authority *formally* received from you will be fully admitted by the people, and my exercising the office of ordination without that formal authority

may be disputed, if there be any opposition on any other account; I could therefore earnestly wish you would exercise that power in this instance, which I have not the shadow of a doubt but God hath invested you with for the good of the Connexion. I think you have tried me too often to doubt whether I will in any degree use the power you are pleased to invest me with further than I believe absolutely necessary for the prosperity of the work. 3. In respect of my brethren, Whatcoat and Vasey, it is very uncertain indeed whether any of the clergy mentioned by brother Rankin will stir a step with me in the work, except Mr. Jarratt; and it is by no means certain he will choose to join me in ordaining: and propriety and universal practice make it expedient that I should have two presbyters with me in this work. In short, it appears to me that everything should be prepared, and everything proper to be done, that can possibly be done, this side the water. You can do all this, and afterwards, according to Mr. Fletcher's advice, give us Letters Testimonial of the different offices with which you have been pleased to invest us. For the purpose of laying hands on brothers Whatcoat and Vasey, I can bring Mr. Creighton down with me, by which you will have two presbyters with you."

The proposal here made was in perfect agreement with the claims of the case. It is true that Coke already held the same ecclesiastical *status* as Wesley, that of a presbyter of the Church; but he did not hold the same relation to the Methodist communion, which Wesley alone possessed, as its father in God. It was necessary, then, that in this grave transaction he should have the most patent authorization from Wesley. It has been well remarked, that "it certainly would not have been fair to a comparatively young man, like Dr. Coke, to send him to America to undertake this work without explicit and formal authority from Mr. Wesley. Supposing the latter had died while the Doctor was on the voyage, what but this formal authority could justify him in the course he had been

sent out to pursue? It seems, therefore, that his suggestions were both wise and prudent.” *

Mr. Wesley saw this clearly, and at once desired Dr. Coke to repair to Bristol, bringing with him the Rev. Mr. Creighton, a presbyter also, of the Church of England, at that time officiating at City-road chapel. The two ministers who had been designated for America at the late Conference, Messrs. Whatcoat and Vasey, were also desired to join them, and hereupon were ordained by the three clergymen as presbyters for America: after which, Doctor Coke was ordained superintendent; Mr. Wesley afterwards presenting him with the underwritten official documents.

I.

“To all to whom these presents shall come, John Wesley, late Fellow of Lincoln College in Oxford, Presbyter of the Church of England, sendeth greeting.

“WHEREAS many of the people in the southern provinces in North America who desire to continue under my care, and still adhere to the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England, are greatly distressed for want of ministers to administer the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, according to the usage of the same Church; and whereas there does not appear to be any other way of supplying them with ministers:

“Know all men, that I, John Wesley, think myself to be providentially called at this time to set apart some persons for the work of the ministry in America. And therefore, under the protection of Almighty God, and with a single eye to His glory, I have this day set apart as a superintendent, by the imposition of my hands, and prayer, (being assisted by other ordained ministers,) Thomas Coke, doctor of civil law, a presbyter of the Church of England, and a man whom I judge to be well qualified for that great work. And I

* Smith, History, vol. i., p. 544.

do hereby recommend him to all whom it may concern, as a fit person to preside over the flock of Christ. In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal this second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty-four.

“JOHN WESLEY.”

II.

“To Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury, and our Brethren in North America.

“By a very uncommon train of providences, many of the provinces of North America are totally disjoined from the mother country, and erected into independent States. The English government has no authority over them, either civil or ecclesiastical, any more than over the States of Holland. A civil authority is exercised over them partly by the Congress, partly by the Provincial Assemblies. But no one either exercises or claims any ecclesiastical authority at all. In this peculiar situation some thousands of the inhabitants of these States desire my advice; and in compliance with their desire I have drawn up a little sketch.

“Lord King’s account of the primitive church convinced me, many years ago, that bishops and presbyters are the same order, and consequently have the same right to ordain. For many years I have been importuned from time to time to exercise this right, by ordaining part of our travelling preachers. But I have still refused; not only for peace sake, but because I was determined as little as possible to violate the established order of the national Church to which I belonged.

“But the case is widely different between England and North America. Here there are bishops who have a legal jurisdiction. In America there are none, neither any parish minister. So that for some hundreds of miles together there is none either to baptize, or to administer the Lord’s Supper. Here therefore my scruples are at an end; and I conceive

myself at full liberty, as I violate no order, and invade no man's right, by appointing and sending labourers into the harvest.

"I have accordingly appointed Dr. Coke and Mr. Francis Asbury to be joint superintendents over our brethren in North America; as also Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey to act as elders among them, by baptizing and administering the Lord's Supper. And I have prepared a Liturgy, little differing from that of the Church of England, (I think, the best-constituted Church in the world,) which I advise all the travelling preachers to use on the Lord's day in all the congregations, reading the litany only on Wednesdays and Fridays, and praying extempore on all other days. I also advise the elders to administer the Supper of the Lord on every Lord's day.

"If any one will point out a more rational and scriptural way of feeding and guiding these poor sheep in the wilderness, I will gladly embrace it. At present I cannot see any better method than that I have taken.

"It has indeed been proposed to desire the English bishops to ordain part of our preachers for America. But to this I object,—1. I desired the Bishop of London to ordain one; but I could not prevail. 2. If they consented, we know the slowness of their proceedings; but the matter admits of no delay.* 3. If they would ordain them now, they would expect to govern them: and how grievously would this entangle us! 4. As our American brethren are now disentangled, both from the state and the English hierarchy, we dare not entangle them again, either with the one or the other. They are now at full liberty simply to follow the Scriptures and the primitive church. And we judge it best that they should stand fast in that liberty wherewith God has so strangely set them free.

"JOHN WESLEY."

Three weeks after these transactions Dr. Coke and his com-

* Note 10.

panions embarked for their voyage, amid the prayers and blessings of a multitude of the people of God.

Of this first voyage we have a full journal, kept by the Doctor himself. They sailed from King's Road on Saturday the 18th of September, and propitious breezes had carried them by Monday a hundred leagues from England. On Tuesday came on one of the great cyclons of the Atlantic, the sea and waves roaring. The Doctor suffered much, and the storm drove them back towards the British coast. On Friday the weather improved, and the good ship made her way. The next Tuesday they were two hundred and fifty leagues from home. On this day they had a sight of a whale and shoals of porpoises. By Saturday another hundred leagues had been passed with an easterly breeze, succeeded by a calm, and then sudden squalls and opposing winds. Dolphins play around the ship, and one of them pays the forfeit for his visit by being transferred to the caldrons and tables of the crew. "It is more like salmon than any other fish I know." Seven hundred leagues are left behind; and so onward, till a sparrow lighting on the rigging gave the omen that they were nearing the American continent.

Dr. Coke's manner of life on the voyage may be inferred from the entries in his journal. After the languor of sickness had passed off, he applied himself to study, and watched for opportunities of doing good among his fellow-voyagers. He enjoyed the leisure now afforded him for his books. "September 18th.—St. Austin's Meditations were made this day no small blessing to my soul. I have a place of retirement, a little secret corner of the ship, which I shall hereafter call my study. There is a window in it which opens to the sea, and makes it the most delightful place under deck. Saturday, October 2d.—Reading Virgil. I can say, in a much better sense than he,—

*'Deus nobis hæc otia fecit,
Namque erit ille mihi semper Deus.'**

* God has provided for us these hours of retirement;
And He shall be my God for ever.

Monday, 4th.—Finished the life of David Brainerd. The most surprising circumstance in the whole, I think, is, that the great work which, by the blessing of God, he wrought among the Indians, was all done through the medium of an interpreter.—We are come about four hundred leagues. Tuesday, 5th.—I have just finished ‘The Confessional,’ and believe the author does not speak without reason in his observations concerning national Churches, that the kingdom of Christ is not of this world; that, in proportion to the degrees of union which subsist between the Church and State, religion is liable to be secularized, and made the tool of sinister and ambitious men.”

Among these readings the great subject which was giving such a character to his life had its full share. “Monday, 18th.—I have waded through Bishop Hoadley’s Treatises on Conformity and Episcopacy—566 pages. He is a powerful reasoner, but is, I believe, wrong in his premises. However, he is very candid. In one place he allows the truth of St. Jerome’s account of the presbyters of Alexandria, who, as Jerome informs us, elected their own bishops for two hundred years, from the time of St. Mark to the time of Dionysius. In another place he makes this grand concession; viz., ‘I think not an uninterrupted line of regularly-ordained bishops necessary.’ (Page 489.) In several other places he grants that there may be cases of necessity which may justify a presbyterian ordination. But he really seems to prove one thing,—that it was the universal practice of the church, from the latter end of the lives of the apostles to the time of the Reformation, to invest the power of ordination in a church-officer superior to the presbyters, whom the church soon after the death of the apostles called bishop by way of pre-eminence.

“Thursday.—I finished the Pastorals of Virgil, which, notwithstanding their many exceptionable passages, by a kind of magic power conveyed me to fields, and groves, and purling brooks, and painted before my eyes all the beauties of Arcadia, and would have almost persuaded me that it is

possible to be happy without God. However, they served now and then to unbend the mind. Friday.—Fasting and prayer. St. Austin's Meditations." This had become his practice. Thus: "Wednesday, 6th.—Devoted this morning to fasting and prayer. A good time. O that I may never lose anything I gain in the Divine life!" On another Friday he makes a similar entry, and says he had "found some degree of refreshment, and a sacred longing after more fervency and activity in the service of God." So, on the following Friday, "Set apart this morning for fasting and prayer; and found it a refreshing season to my soul." He sometimes read with his two brethren, inviting the captain and others to spend an hour with them. The captain was a moral man, and the ship's company in general were disposed to receive good advice. Coke and his brethren took every opportunity of preaching to them. "Sunday, 26th.—This day we performed Divine service both morning and afternoon; and the sailors, except those on immediate duty, attended. A French ship passed us with her colours hoisted, and of course expected the same compliment from ours, whilst I was enforcing the example of the jailer converted by Paul and Silas; which much interrupted us. The little congregation appeared to give close attention to brother Whatcoat in the afternoon, while he explained to them 'the wages of sin' and 'the gift of God.' Sunday, 10th.—Messrs. Whatcoat and Vasey preached to the sailors, and I expounded in the evening. They now attend morning and evening on the week-days. Sunday, 24th.—I never in my life saw so beautiful a sky as this morning a little before sunrise; so delightful a mixture of colours, and so fine a fretwork. I do not wonder that the poor heathen worship the sun. During our afternoon service, and whilst I preached my farewell sermon, the people listened with great attention." The outward habits of the sailors, he states, had become much improved, but no case of evident conversion appeared among them, except one. "The Lord has, I trust, given us one soul among the sailors, that of Richard

Hare. His mother lived at Stepney in London, and was a member of our Society."

Dr. Coke landed at New-York on the 3d of November, and was received with hearty welcome by Mr. Dickins, the preacher stationed there. The same evening he preached on the Interior Kingdom of God; the following morning on Desire after God; and the day after on being Sealed with the Holy Spirit. He then left for Philadelphia, where, on the Sunday, he preached in St. Paul's church, and in the evening at the chapel, upon the Witness of the Spirit. He was introduced to the governor of the state, whom he found an admirer of the writings of Fletcher and a personal friend of Mr. Wesley. Proceeding through the state of Delaware, Mr. Whatcoat and himself were everywhere received with hospitality, and diligently employed in preaching the word. At Dover, in this state, he met with Freeborn Garrettson, "an excellent young man, all meekness and love, and yet all activity. He makes me ashamed, for he invariably rises at four; and not only he, but several of the preachers. And now, blushing, I brought back my alarum to four o'clock."*

The Doctor's first interview with Mr. Asbury now took place. "Sunday, 14th.—Brother Whatcoat had a very good congregation in the court-house, at six in the morning. About ten o'clock we arrived at Barret's chapel, so called from the name of our friend who built it, and who went to heaven a few days ago. In this chapel, in the midst of a forest, I had a noble congregation, to whom I endeavoured to set forth the Redeemer as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. After the sermon, a plain, robust man came up to me in the pulpit, and kissed me: I thought it could be no other than Mr. Asbury, and I was not deceived. I administered the sacrament, after preaching, to five or six hundred communicants, and held a lovefeast. It was the best season I ever knew, except one at Charlemont in

* See a further notice of Garrettson in the Supplement. Note 11.

Ireland. After dinner Mr. Asbury and I had a private conversation on the future management of our affairs in America. He informed me that he had received some intimations of my arrival on the continent, and had collected a considerable number of the preachers to form a council; and if they were of opinion that it would be expedient immediately to call a Conference, it should be done. They were accordingly sent for, and, after debate, were unanimously of that opinion. We therefore sent off F. Garrettson like an arrow from north to south, directing him to send messengers to the right and left, and to gather all the preachers together at Baltimore on Christmas-eve. Mr. Asbury has also drawn up for me a route of about a thousand miles in the mean time. He has given me his black, (Harry, by name,) and borrowed an excellent horse for me. I exceedingly reverence Mr. Asbury; he has so much wisdom and consideration, so much meekness and love; and under all this, though hardly to be perceived, so much command and authority. He and I have agreed to use our joint endeavours to establish a school or college. I baptized here thirty or forty infants, and seven adults. We had indeed a precious time at the baptism of the adults."

Now followed extensive itinerancies in Delaware, Virginia, and Maryland, in which he preached both in the towns and forest-stations. For specimens, we dip here and there into the journal:—"Annamessex chapel, Somerset, Monday, 22d.—I preached to a tolerable congregation in a forest. It is romantic to see such numbers of horses fastened to the trees. Being engaged in the most solemn exercises of religion for three or four hours every day, and that in the middle of the day, I hardly know the day of the week: every one appears to me like the Lord's day.

"Wednesday, December 1st.—Preached at a chapel of ours in a forest, called Lane's chapel. Here I had a large, lively congregation, baptized a great many children, and administered the sacrament to many communicants. For a week past I have been in a barren country for the Gospel;

but am now, blessed be God, got again into the heart of Methodism. Thursday, 2d.—Rode through heavy rains and through the forests to Mr. Airey's, in Dorset county, Maryland; a most excellent man, and our valuable friend. In this place I had a very lively congregation; as also at Colonel Vickers's on Saturday, 4th, where I administered the sacrament.

"Sunday, 5th, Cambridge.—In this town, which has been remarkable above any other on the continent for persecution, there arose a great dispute whether I should preach in the church or not. The ladies in general were for it, but the gentlemen against it; and the gentlemen prevailed. Accordingly the church-door was locked, though they have had no service in it, I think, for several years; and it has frequently been left open, I am informed, for cows, dogs, and pigs. However, I read prayers and preached, at the door of a cottage, to one of the largest congregations I have had in America.

"Dr. Allen's, Monday, 6th.—I preached at noon at a place called Bolingbroke. Our chapel is in a forest. Perhaps I have in this tour baptized more children and adults than I should in my whole life, if stationed in an English parish. I had this morning a great escape in crossing a broad ferry. After setting off, Harry persuaded me to turn back and leave our horses behind us, to be sent after me the next day, on account of the violence of the wind. I have hardly a doubt but that we should have been drowned if we had not taken that step. We were in great danger as it was.

"Wednesday, 8th.—I preached to a lively congregation at Tuckahoe chapel in a forest. The best singers I have met with in America. In the afternoon went to Colonel Hopper's; a man of excellent sense, a member of our Society, six years sheriff of Caroline county, and late a representative in the Assembly. In my way, dined with the present representative, a dear brother, who has lately 'built us a synagogue.' Some time ago, during the war, when he was sheriff for the county, one of our preachers was apprehended because he would not

take the oaths of allegiance. Mr. Downs (the sheriff) told the preacher that he was obliged to imprison him, but that he would turn his own house into his prison; and both the colonel and his lady were awakened by their prisoner." Of another gentleman in those parts, named Emery, the Doctor remarks: "When Mrs. Emery received one day, at preaching, a sense of pardon, and related at home the blessing she had received, Mr. Emery, who was a candid inquirer after truth, and placed the greatest confidence in his wife, was awakened by the relation, and used to continue on his knees at prayer till they bled, and never rested till he was clearly justified."

"Near the Chesapeake, Monday, 13th.—At noon preached, baptized, and administered the sacrament in Kent chapel; and at three preached in Worton chapel, to a large congregation.

"Tuesday, 14th.—Crossed the bay, and at the other side [was] met by Mr. Dallam in his chariot, to whose house I went. He is brother-in-law to the governor of the state, and a member of our Society. We have a preaching-house near, where I preached to a few. Mr. Asbury met me on this side of the bay: between us we have got about one thousand pounds sterling subscribed for the college."

The Conference had been appointed to assemble at Baltimore at Christmas: Mr. Asbury joined the Doctor there some days previously. Asbury in his journal says: "I observed this day as a day of fasting and prayer, that I might know the will of God in the matter that is to come before the Conference. The preachers and people seem to be much pleased with the projected plan. I myself am led to think it is of the Lord. I am not tickled with the honour to be gained. I see danger in the way. My soul waits upon God. O that He may lead us in the way we should go!"

By the 25th of December sixty out of the eighty-three preachers then travelling in America had arrived in Baltimore. The Conference was then duly constituted, with Dr. Coke as president. The great feature in this Conference was the ordination of the "superintendent and elders." The Confer-

ence by a unanimous vote signified their concurrence in the appointment and designation of Dr. Coke and Mr. Asbury to the office of general superintendents. After this act Mr. Asbury was ordained, first a deacon, then an elder or presbyter; and then by Dr. Coke, assisted by two presbyters, one of whom (the Rev. Mr. Otterbine) was of the Lutheran Church, he was consecrated to the office of "superintendent."

Of Mr. Asbury's instauration to this office Coke gave the following certificate :—

"Know all men by these presents, that I, Thomas Coke, Doctor of Civil Law, late of Jesus College, in the University of Oxford, presbyter of the Church of England, and superintendent of the Methodist Church in America, under the protection of Almighty God, and with a single eye to His glory, by the imposition of my hands and prayer, being assisted by two ordained elders, did on the twenty-fifth day of this month, December, set apart Francis Asbury for the office of a deacon in the aforesaid Methodist Episcopal Church. And also on the twenty-sixth day of the said month, did, by the imposition of my hands and prayer, being assisted by the said elders, set apart the said Francis Asbury for the office of elder in the said Methodist Episcopal Church. And on this twenty-seventh of the said month, being the day of the date hereof, have, by the imposition of my hands and prayer, being assisted by the said elders, set apart the said Francis Asbury for the office of a superintendent in the said Methodist Episcopal Church; a man whom I judge to be well qualified for that great work. And I do hereby recommend him to all whom it may concern, as a fit person to preside over the flock of Christ. In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal, this 27th day of December, in the year of our Lord 1784.

"THOMAS COKE."

The sermon usual on occasions of this kind was preached by Dr. Coke from Rev. iii. 7, 8: "To the angel of the church

in Philadelphia write; These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an opened door, and no man can shut it." In this discourse, after stating his belief that "of all the forms of church-government a moderate episcopacy is the best, the executive power being lodged in the hands of one, or at least a few, whereby vigour and activity are given to the resolves of the body, and those two essential requisites for any great undertaking are sweetly united, calmness and wisdom in deliberating, and acting with expedition and force,"—and explaining the grounds on which the present ordination had taken place, and vindicating it on the principles of most of the Reformed churches in Christendom,—he opens the meaning of his text, and proceeds to describe the spiritual characteristics of a true Christian bishop: humility and meekness, gentleness, patience and fortitude, zeal and wisdom, communion with God, and seriousness of purpose and conduct. "The man who answers to this description is a blessing to the world, a polished shaft in the quiver of God, a burning and a shining light. When he visits a people, he comes in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel. He husbands every golden moment, picks up every fragment of time, and devotes his little all to the service of his Lord. He looks with the deepest contempt on filthy lucre, satisfied with the riches of Christ.

"O Thou Lover of souls, who willest not the death of a sinner, have pity on the world. Remember Calvary. Hear the pleading Intercessor, and raise up men after Thine own heart, full of the Holy Ghost, full of love, and full of zeal. Guide them by Thy Spirit; accompany them with Thine omnipotence, that they may tread the kingdom of Satan under their feet, and build up Thy glorious church.

"You may now perceive the dreadful effects of raising immoral or unconverted men to the government of the church. The baneful influence of their example is so extensive, that

the skill and cruelty of devils can hardly fabricate a greater curse than an irreligious bishop.

“But thou, O man of God, follow after righteousness, godliness, patience, and meekness. Be an example to the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Keep that which is committed to thy trust. Be not ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, but a partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel according to the power of God. Endure hardships as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Do the work of an evangelist, and make full proof of thy ministry; and thy God will open to thee a wide door, which all thy enemies shall not be able to shut. He will carry His Gospel by thee from sea to sea, and from one end of the continent to another.

“O Thou who art the Holy One and the True, consecrate this Thy servant with the fire of Divine love; separate him for Thy glorious purpose; make him a star in Thine own right hand; and fulfil in him, and by him, the good pleasure of Thy goodness.”

CHAPTER V

HOLY ORDERS.

THE consequences of this transaction, unfolding more and more as years pass on, in their influence on the social life of a great nation, and of others through it, and in their direct bearings on the salvation of innumerable multitudes, past and yet unborn, give it a place among the events whose memorial no ages can efface, not only written in the annals of time, but inscribed on the pillars of eternity. An American historian has therefore not in the least overrated it when he describes it as "one of the most important ecclesiastical events of the eighteenth century, or indeed since the Reformation. The colonial English Church being dissolved by the Revolution, its dwindled fragments were yet floating, as had been the Methodist Societies, on the stormy tide. Methodism preceded it in re-organization. The Methodist bishops were the first Protestant bishops, and Methodism was the first Protestant Episcopal Church, of the New World; and as Wesley had given it the Anglican Articles of Religion, and the Liturgy, wisely abridged, it became, both by its precedent organization, and its subsequent numerical importance, the real successor to the Anglican Church in America." *

But, it may be asked, did Wesley intend that the matter should take this fixed and imposing form, and that the Methodist communion in America should thus pass at a stride to the highest ecclesiastical *status*, and claim to be ranked among the acknowledged Episcopal Churches of Christendom? Who can doubt it, after considering either his words or his acts?

* History of the Religious Movement of the Eighteenth Century. By Dr. Abel Stevens. Vol. ii., p. 215.

1. He expresses to the Methodist Societies his last wish that they should conform themselves to "the discipline of the Church of England," which, all the world knows, is episcopal. 2. In devising the means to this end, he avers his conviction, that as, according to his long settled belief, a presbyter is co-ordinate with a bishop, he as a presbyter had the power of appointing or ordaining a brother-presbyter to the episcopal office; that he had, it was true, "scruples" about doing this in England, because there were in this country bishops who already had legitimate jurisdiction; but that, the late political changes having abolished the Church of England in America, all his scruples with regard to doing it for that country were at an end. 3. He hereupon takes Dr. Coke, a fellow-presbyter already, and ordains him to the office of superintendent over the Methodist body in America; at the same time ordaining two other men to the inferior office of the presbyterate. 4. And, to insure the perpetuity of this organization of the American Methodist ministry, he provides them a Liturgy, in which he draws up an office of ordination for the three orders of an Episcopal Church; viz., deacons, elders, and superintendents. The case is too plain to admit of a doubt.* The substitution of the term "elder" for "presbyter," and that of "superintendent" for "bishop," does not affect the argument. Mr. Wesley desired to be as inoffensive as possible, while firmly bent on doing what he considered to be needful and right. To the title of "Methodist Episcopal Church" he made no objection; though when, after the lapse of some time, the name of bishop was adopted by the Church in preference to that of superintendent, unable perhaps to divest his mind of the English associations connected with the title, he certainly did express his disapproval of its adoption. The American ministers conceived that they were right in making

* Whoever wishes for a more complete demonstration of this will find it in the work just referred to; (Stevens, vol. ii., chap. 7;) also in "A Defence of our Fathers, and of the original Organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church," by Dr. Emory, New-York, 1827.

the change; considering, and in this respect wisely, that the name which the Spirit of God has employed in His holy word is infinitely preferable to any other which a mere man might substitute.

Now, it could not have been expected, nor can it still, that the measure we have described should be regarded by religious men of different communions with the same sentiments of approval. A man will form his opinion of it according to the principles of his own ecclesiastical system. Among the Presbyterian Churches of England and Scotland, Europe and America, an ordination like this will be considered thoroughly valid. On the other hand, by the more rigid votaries of canonical order in the Anglican and Romish Churches,* the whole procedure was, and still will be, pronounced illicit and unwarrantable, and nothing less than the fabrication of a counterfeit episcopacy, the very existence of which is a profane slight upon the true and legitimate succession of bishops, as found in the oldest churches of east and western Christendom. Into this old controversy I have no inclination to go, except so far as to unfold the principles of the man whose life I am writing. The task of the biographer is not that of a polemic, but of an historian. What he has to do is to give an honest statement of the conduct of him whose career he has to unfold, and, that a right judgment may be formed of it, of the principles on which it proceeded. Beyond this, as in the present case, his responsibility does not extend. While thus compelled to touch upon this unprofitable controversy, we will do it in as few words as possible. The writer of these pages, in principle an Episcopalian of the school of Wesley, while expressing his persuasion that the objection above alluded to can never be sustained, feels himself nevertheless incapable of assailing it with irreverence: nor would the Founder of Methodism have done so, nor the man whose life is before us.

* Only by such: for among the best episcopal divines there have been, and are, many who would admit, with Hooker, that in "the exigence of necessity" such a measure is justifiable.—*Ecclesiastical Polity*, book ii., sec. 14.

Both Mr. Wesley and Dr. Coke recognised an apostolical succession, viewed as implying a due transmission of the Christian ministry. How could they do otherwise, believing as they did the promise of Christ, “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world?” words which indicate the certainty of a perpetual succession, with the persons composing which, Jesus declares, He would be always. The Methodists who retain the sentiments of their Founder believe in the perpetuation of the Christian ministry in its pure teachings, its holy zeal, its earnest labours, and its saving effects, by the agency of men spiritually qualified for it, and openly recognised and appointed as the servants and witnesses of Christ, and under Him the pastors and shepherds of His church. This succession is an historical and visible fact. Again, with respect to the circumstantial succession of men in various churches bearing the official dignity of bishops, they acknowledge its reality so far as it can be demonstrated; and could any particular church demonstrate a concatenated series of such bishops, extending by sound, authentic, and canonical tenure, in every individual case, from the present holders of the office away to the time of any one of the apostles, they are ready to give that succession all the homage it could rightfully claim. But no reasonable man will be offended by their asking, In what church can such an unbroken succession be honestly identified? Can it be even in that of Rome, with which some theorists in the Church of England claim an episcopal affiliation? Not to insist on the confusion and defectiveness of the earlier links of the boasted chain,—defects which are of themselves fatal to the demonstration required,—to him who will read enough in canon law, and wade through the acts of the great councils, (as some of us have done,) for the purpose of ascertaining the essential requisites of a true canonical bishop, it will be too plain that, tested by their own ecclesiastical law, many of the mediæval bishops, so called, from simony, heresy, and irregular ordination, were no bishops at all. We say not a word about the personal character of

the men, black with abominable crimes; but conceding for a moment the dogma that a man rank with every vice, if canonically ordained, would be still a bishop, we affirm that the ordination itself of some of them was illegitimate and worthless. Is it alleged against Wesley, a man whose purity and majesty of character make him resemble the angel standing in the sun, that his episcopate was a nullity? What, then, was theirs?

Nor is such a succession comprobated even in the Eastern Churches. The Greek Church itself is repudiated by that of Rome as schismatical. The charge alleged against it in the eighth century by the Western Church, of heresy respecting the Person of the Holy Spirit, would of itself compromise the purity of its ordinations; but the question took a more pragmatic form in the following century, when, in consequence of the deposition of the Patriarch Ignatius by the Emperor Michael, who substituted a layman in his room, (a step which had the concurrence of a synod of the clergy!) Pope Nicholas convened a synod at Rome (A.D. 862) which excommunicated both the intruder and his adherents; and they in their turn excommunicated the Pope and his synod:—measures which must, without controversy, have utterly invalidated the ordaining power of each party, regarded from the ecclesiastical point of view.

But go back earlier. The canons of the Church which prohibit any recognition of a bishop who is a heretic, were founded both in reason and the authority of Scripture. “A man that is a heretic, reject.” But was Arianism no heresy? Yet, how many a bishop, who is wanted as a link in the alleged apostolical succession of the Greek Church, would be found a zealous abettor of the heresy which denies supreme divinity to the Son of God! The apostles preached the Godhead of the Redeemer: how can they who as steadfastly denied it be considered as their successors?

Again. The Jacobite Church of Syria, than which no communion is more fastidious on the subject before us, labours

under the imputation of an heretical (Monophysite) origin; and it was organized as a specific Church by a man of whose right to ordain as a bishop there exist doubts which have never been cleared up. The Nestorians, who certainly knew more about the matter than the annalists of the Western Church, have a tradition that Jacob Zanzala,* the founder of the Jacobites, ordained a multitude of presbyters and *bishops*, while he himself was as yet only a simple presbyter.† But, admitting that he had been ordained to the episcopal office, as the other tradition affirms, by some bishops who had been imprisoned by the emperor as abettors of the Monophysite heresy, still, if the canons of the Church are of any force, that ordination was null on account of his and their heresy. On the other hand, the Nestorian Church may not be so triumphant over their Jacobite brethren in this matter; for, if their case be put to a rigid examen, it appears but to ill advantage. Nestorius was condemned by a general council as a heretic. But if it be argued that the succession of the Oriental Church which took his part, and bore his name for it, was really independent of the heresiarch of Constantinople, and we were to concede the fact, and trace their succession back from one catholicos or patriarch to another, till we reach the time of the men who, as the founders of the Church in the countries on the Euphrates, joined hands (so to speak) with the apostles themselves, or, in the idea of the successional chain, formed the links which united the Church with the apostolic pillar,—

* Surnamed Baradæus, (Al Bardai,) a cognomen which D'Herbelot says was given him from the circumstance of his wearing a mantle of coarse hair woven into a stuff which the Arabs call *Barda*. Jacob was a sincere and zealous man.

† “*Antiocheni Jacobitarum patriarchæ, quamvis successionem habent propriorem ex suâ hæresi antistitum, ea tamen non adeo certa est, quum Severus Antiochenus et Jacobus Baradæus multas contra communem Ecclesiæ disciplinam ordinationes celebrassent, quarum validitas in dubium vocari poterat. Et sane parum commode sensisse de illis Nestorianos testantur Maris et Amrus, qui Jacobum Baradæum simplicem sacerdotem fuisse scribunt; ordinasse tamen episcopos et sacerdotes bis millenos et amplius.*”—Renaudot, *Liturgy. Orient.*, tom. i., p. 365.

Agæus and Mares, and, last of all, Adæus;—we have still to ask, Were these earliest members in the series bishops, in the modern sense? No, they were simple co-evangelists, as far as may be ascertained, without any ecclesiastical orders whatever. According to Abul Farai, Marus of Soba, and Elias of Damascus, Agæus was a weaver.* Both he and his companions appear to have come under the description of those early believers we read of in the eighth chapter of the Acts, who in their wanderings “went everywhere preaching the word;” a class of persons on whom the more rigid of our mediæval canonists would look with not a little contempt, though it is written that “the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.” In effect, the question of a succession of individuals, each duly qualified for and legitimately constituted in the episcopal office, from any of the apostles downwards, when examined with even a merely canonical exactness, to say nothing of a scriptural judgment, becomes a labyrinth of difficulties; and it would seem that Divine Providence had so overruled or permitted certain events in the history of all churches which have made such a claim, as to confound the pretensions of those who are disposed to glory in the adventitious externals of Christianity, rather than in its intrinsic, spiritual, and immutable excellencies.

But, could a sound line of bishops in all or any of the churches be demonstrated, the previous question would still remain to be settled, Are they identical in order with presbyters, though not in jurisdiction? or are they different in order, as well as jurisdiction and degree? And that is a question which, we conceive, can be scientifically solved only by an appeal to the apostolic prescriptions as existing in the New Testament. In those uncorrupted archives of all true and pure practice we have it laid down, first, that the apostles ordained presbyters in all the churches; (Acts xiv. 23;) and,

* Asseman, *Bib. Orient.*, tom. 4.

secondly, that they affirmed those presbyters to be bishops. That is how the case stands in The Book,—deny it who can.

Compare Acts xx. 17 with verse 28 ; Titus i. 5 with verse 7, where the appellations “bishop” and “presbyter” are used interchangeably. Also Phil. i. 1 ; 1 Tim. iii. 1, and verse 8 ; where the office of deacon is named immediately after that of bishop, so that “between these two church-offices there could not still be a third intervening one.”* “The apostle Paul,” writes St. Augustine, “proves that he understood a presbyter to be a bishop: for what is a bishop, unless the chief presbyter?” Even Cyprian recognises the inherent episcopal powers of presbyters, in deputing them to act for the bishop in his absence. “*His literis et hortor et mando, ut vos vice meâ fungamini circa gerenda ea quæ administratio religiosa deposcit.*”

In the Peschito Syriac version of the New Testament, some portions of which were executed in the apostolic time, the Greek name *Episkopos*, “a bishop,” is always rendered by the word *Kashisha*, “a presbyter.” Thus 1 Tim. iii. 2 : “A presbyter must be blameless.” (Greek, “A bishop.”) Phil. i. 1 : “To the presbyters and deacons.” (Greek, “To the bishops,” &c.) 1 Tim. iii. 1 : “If a man desire the presbyterate,” *Kashishultha*. (Greek, “the episcopate.”) The late Bishop of Peterborough in his notes on Michaelis, referring to this usage of the venerable Syrian version, observes that “it proves that the Syriac translator understood his original, and that he made a proper distinction between the language of the primitive and that of the hierarchical church.”†

The Christian ministry as ordained by the apostles had, therefore, a presbyterian constitution ; but from that constitution episcopacy took a necessary, and, we doubt not, a designed, development. An organic body requires a head. The single congregation served by a single presbyter would have in him a legitimate *episkopos* or overseer. A college of

* Neander, vol. i., p. 251.

† Marsh's Michaelis, vol. ii., p. 553.

presbyters in a larger church, or the pastors of a number of churches in diocesan communion, would equally need a *proestōs* or primate. Co-ordinate with his brethren as a presbyter, he would be nevertheless invested with a jurisdictional elevation,—*primus inter pares*. The need for this arrangement was connate with the creation of the churches themselves; and in the episcopate of St. James at Jerusalem, and the indications given in the first three chapters of the Apocalypse, we see that it was a want promptly supplied in the apostolic age. Episcopacy, therefore, in this moderate and primitive form, is an apostolical ordinance, as much as presbytery. Nor will the long strife between the ultra adherents of either system be brought to an end, till this plain principle is admitted. The champions of each exclusive system resemble the two knights who met from opposite directions at a spot where hung the shield which on one side was of silver, and on the other of gold. “This golden shield,” began one:—“Golden?” broke in the other; “it is silver.” So began the quarrel, which was passing from words to blows, till a bystander pointed out to them how each was both wrong and right. Thus, too, in the wordy war between the advocates of these rival forms of ecclesiastical regimen. Both are wrong, and yet both are right. A bishop is a presbyter, but a presbyter with episcopal dignity and jurisdiction.

These considerations will clear up the difficulty as to Wesley’s ordination of the American bishops. Looked at from the canonical standpoint, we admit it was an irregularity, and one which, to his own feelings as a churchman, was warranted only by necessity. But, considered from the scriptural point of view, it was no irregularity at all, but a transaction in thorough harmony with apostolic principle and practice.*

* There were once bishops of this presbyterian type in the British Church. Beda, mentioning Cedda, one of the most active missionaries among the Saxons, writes, that he had received episcopal consecration from a bishop who had been himself ordained by the presbyters of Iona.

Ecclesiastical usages and canonic statutes are conventional and mutable; holy Scripture is primordial and Divine. One text of the word of God will outweigh in authority all the canons and decretals in the whole "*Collectio Conciliorum*," though it amounted to twice the seventeen folios in which they have found their undisturbed repose. Wesley and Coke did not act in this matter from mere expediency, in reckless disregard of all principle. They had a Bible warrant for what they did. And if any additional supports were necessary, they could find them in the recorded convictions of men of the highest ecclesiastical rank, who walked by the same rule.

Listen to St. Jerome:—"Our intention is to show that among the ancients presbyters and bishops were the very same. But, that by little and little the plants of dissension might be plucked up, the whole concern was devolved upon an individual. As the presbyters therefore knew that they were subjected by the custom of the Church to him who was their president, so let the bishops know that they are greater than presbyters more by custom than by any appointment of the Lord."

Again: "Presbyters and bishops were formerly the same... But it was afterward decreed that one person elected from the rest of the presbyters in each church should be placed over the others; that, the chief care of the church devolving upon him, the seeds of division might be taken away."—Commentary on Titus i. 1.

And again: "After the apostles' times one presbyter was placed over the rest as a remedy against schism. At Alexandria, from the evangelist Mark up to Heraclas and Dionysius the bishops, (cir. A.D. 250,) the presbyters always elected one from among themselves, and placed him in the higher chair, and gave him the name of bishop:* in the same manner as an army may make its general, or as deacons elect one of

* Eutychius, in his *Origines Ecclesiæ Alexandrinæ*, (edited by Selden,) expressly affirms that the presbyters did this by the imposition of their hands.

themselves whose industry they know, and call him arch-deacon.”—Ad. Evag.

We have referred already to Cyprian, a man who evidently had a sufficiency of the prelatie spirit. Yet even he, when pressed by need, gave full power to his presbyters to act in his stead. From the retirement to which he had been driven by persecution he writes to them: “I beseech you, according to your faith and religion, that you perform your own duties, and also those belonging to me; so that nothing may be wanting either as to discipline or diligence.”—Epist. 5.

A contemporary of Cyprian, Firmilian, Bishop of Cæsarea, in a letter inserted in the works of the former, uses very decisive terms: “All power and grace is in the Church, in which elders preside, and have the power of baptizing, confirming, and ordaining.”*

Among the most learned men of more modern times who thought in the same way, we may instance Erasmus, who writes: “Anciently none were called priests but bishops and presbyters, who were the same.”†

And Grotius:—“*Episkope*, or the office of a bishop, signifies inspection or oversight of any kind. The inspectors, or those who preside over the church, are presbyters. The chief of these presbyters afterwards, by way of excellence, began to be called bishop.”‡

In our own English Church the earliest of the Reformers were of like judgment. “I affirm,” says Wycliffe, “that in the time of Paul ‘presbyter’ and ‘bishop’ were names of the same office.” Archbishop Cranmer, in his “Institution of a Christian Man,” affirms that “there were at first but two orders, deacons or ministers, and priests or bishops.” And elsewhere: “In the beginning of Christ’s religion, bishops and priests were not two things, but both one.”

* “*Omnis potestas et gratia in ecclesiâ constituta sit, ubi præsent majores natu, qui et baptizandi et manum imponendi et ordinandi possident potestatem.*”

† *Scholia in Epist. Hieron. ad Nepot.*

‡ Annot. in 1 Tim. iii. 1.

Bishop Stillingsfleet, remarking on the honest acknowledgment of Eusebius, "Who they were that by the apostles were thought worthy to govern the churches which they had planted, is no easy thing to tell, excepting such as may be collected from St. Paul's own words," (Ecc. Hist., lib. iii., cap. 4,)—observes: "If the successors of the apostles, by the confession of Eusebius, are not certainly to be discovered; then what becomes of that unquestionable line of succession of the bishops of several churches, and the large diagrams made of the apostolical churches with every one's name set down in his order, as if the writer had been Clarenceux to the apostles themselves? Are all the great outcries of apostolical tradition, of personal succession, of unquestionable records, resolved at last into the Scripture itself, by him from whom all these long pedigrees are fetched? Then let succession know its place, and learn to vaile bonnet to the Scriptures."

Bishop Burnet, in his exposition of the 13th Article, says: "The definition here given of those that are lawfully called and sent, is put in very general words; far from that magisterial stiffness in which some have taken upon them to dictate in this matter. The article does not resolve this into any particular constitution, but leaves the matter open and at large for any such accidents as had happened, and such as might still happen. They who drew it had the state of the several churches before their eyes, that had been differently reformed; and, although their own had been less forced to go out of the beaten path than any other, yet they knew that all things among themselves had not gone according to those rules that ought to be sacred in regular times. Necessity has no law, and is a law to itself."

Baxter, in relating a conversation he had with Archbishop Usher, says: "I asked him also his judgment about the validity of presbyters' ordination, which he asserted; and told me that King Charles I. asked him at the Isle of Wight, wherever he found in antiquity that presbyters ordained any?"

And that he answered, I can show your majesty more ; even where presbyters alone successively ordained bishops, and instanced in Hierome's words in his Epistle to Evagrius."

Usher was one of the most learned, devout, and catholic-minded men of his times. On one occasion, having expressed his sense of what he apprehended the deficiency of certain churches abroad, in being without episcopacy, he added : " Yet for the testifying of my communion with those churches, which I do love and honour as true members of the church universal, I do confess that with like affection I could receive the blessed sacrament at the hand of the Dutch ministers, if I were in Holland, or at the hands of the French ministers, if I were at Charenton." These great and good words remind me of the noble declaration of that true ornament to the Church of England, the late Mr. Wilberforce, who used to say, " Though I am an Episcopalian by education and conviction, yet I feel such a oneness and sympathy with the cause of God at large, that nothing would be more delightful than my communing once a year with every church that holds the Head, even Christ." Thus spake one worthy of the Christian name, a disciple indeed of Him who said, " Whosoever shall do the will of My Father who is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother."

We could multiply examples and testimonies ; but we have furnished enough to show that, if Mr. Wesley was in error, he erred in very good company. But neither he nor they were in mistake, if the Scripture of truth is to be the arbiter. The measure we have described had the warrant of inspiration ; and it was confirmed by the visible benediction of Heaven. How glorious the work of mercy which has been already wrought by the ministry then ordained ! At the Baltimore Conference, when those consecrations took place, (in 1784,) there were 83 preachers in America, and 14,986 members in the Society. The Minutes of the Methodist Episcopal Church for the year 1858 give returns of forty Conferences, 8,936 ordained ministers, 12,437 local preachers, and 1,662,000 mem-

bers. They have 11,490 Sunday-schools, with 129,368 teachers, and 677,217 scholars. The libraries of those Sunday-schools comprise more than two millions of volumes. The chartered universities of the Methodists are influential; and their colleges and schools are numerous. The number of hearers in the United States, who attend the Methodist ministry, approaches 7,000,000. All this is exclusive of the statistics of the Methodist body in Canada, Newfoundland, and Nova-Scotia; and of various sects which have seceded from the Methodist Episcopal Church, but which still retain some degrees of relationship to Methodism. The operations of the Church in the departments of the Missionary and Bible Society enterprises are also carried on with ever-increasing vigour. By all these means myriads of people are gathered from the world into the fellowship of the church, no more aliens, but fellow-citizens with the saints; and are built on the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord.

As to deny that this magnificent work of mercy gives manifestation of the Divine concurrence would be nothing less than a blasphemy against the Holy Spirit of God; so, in acknowledging the operations of His presence and grace, we recognise His approval of the means employed, and confess that the act by which Asbury and Coke were invested with the scriptural episcopate bears the token of the solemn attestation of Heaven, and the seal of the everlasting King.

CHAPTER VI.

LABOURS IN AMERICA.

THE biography of men who have taken a distinguished part in the public events of their day will necessitate sometimes a reference to principles and doctrines, which interferes with the continuity of the narrative. We shall have now, however, no longer need of extensive digression, but be able to review the remaining agencies of this good man's life without the nuisance of further polemical discussion. The five months spent by Dr. Coke in America, subsequent to the transactions already recorded, were passed in almost uninterrupted activity for the consolidation and advancement of the work so auspiciously begun. At Baltimore he preached before the Conference a sermon on the Divinity of Christ, which, by request of the ministers, he committed to the press. In this plain but substantial discourse the preacher set forth the scriptural demonstration of the Redeemer's Divine nature and majesty, from His titles, attributes, and operations. He had enriched the sermon with valuable materials from the works of Randolph and Hoole. The concluding paragraphs glow with the hope and love which steadfast faith in the Godhead of the Saviour awakens and perfects in the soul.

A second literary undertaking was the publication of a digest of laws for the government of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Prior to the regular constitution of that Church, the Methodist Societies had observed as their rule of discipline the compendium known in England by the name of the "Large Minutes." The new status of the American communion, and the difference of their circumstances, national and geographic, demanded a code of their own. Mr. Asbury had already

brought his sagacity and experience to bear on the subject, and had prepared outlines of a general kind, which were submitted to the Baltimore Conference, and adopted. These were now carefully revised by himself and Dr. Coke, and published in the following year as an authentic "Form of Discipline." It was bound up with the Liturgy and Hymn-Book. On a subsequent visit to America, Dr. Coke appended to the code of laws a body of notes, consisting partly of scriptural warrants for the doctrines and rules of the Church, and expositions of such parts of the "Discipline" as needed elucidation. In the third edition, of 1787, the manual of discipline was remodelled in form by a more systematic arrangement of the topics; and it has ever since, with occasional supplements and modifications, formed the canon of Methodist law in America. The original title was, "Minutes of several Conversations between the Rev. Thomas Coke, LL.D., the Rev. Francis Asbury, and others, at a Conference begun in Baltimore, in the State of Maryland, on Monday, 27 December, in the Year 1784: composing a Form of Discipline for the Ministers, Preachers, and other Members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America." In 1786 it was altered thus,—"The General Minutes of the Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, forming the Constitution of the said Church;" and in 1787, "A Form of Discipline for the Ministers, Preachers, and Members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, considered and approved in a Conference held in Baltimore, &c., in which the Rev. Thomas Coke, LL.D., and the Rev. Francis Asbury, presided: arranged under proper Heads, and methodized in a more acceptable and easy Manner." The present title, adopted in 1804, is simply, "The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church." Taken together with the commentary, this handbook is an admirable enchiridion of church-discipline. It is arranged under the following capitulars:—Chapter i., section 1. Of the Origin of the Methodist Episcopal Church. 2. Articles of

Religion, (those of the Church of England, with a few circumstantial omissions,) as arranged by Mr. Wesley. 3. Of the General and Annual Conferences. 4. The Election and Consecration of Bishops, and their Duty. 5. Presiding Elders, and their Duty. 6. Travelling Elders; their Election, Ordination, and Duty. 7 Travelling Deacons; their Election, Ordination, and Duty. 8. Reception of Preachers from the Wesleyan Connexion, and from other Denominations. 9. Method of receiving them, and their Duty. 10. Duties of those who have the Charge of Circuits. 11. Of the Trial of those who think they are moved by the Holy Ghost to preach. 12. Of the Matter and Manner of Preaching, and other public Exercises. 13. Duty of Preachers to God, themselves, and one another. 14. Rules by which we should continue or desist from preaching at any Place. 15. Of visiting from House to House, guarding against those Things which are so common to Professors, and enforcing practical Religion. 16. Of the Instruction of Children. 17 Of employing our Time profitably when we are not travelling, &c. 18. Of the Necessity of Union among ourselves. 19. Of the Method by which immoral Preachers shall be brought to Trial. 20. How to provide for the Circuits in Time of Conference, and to preserve and increase the Work of God. 21. Of Local Preachers. 22. Of Baptism. 23. Of the Lord's Supper. 24. Of Public Worship. 25. Of the Spirit and Truth of Singing.

Chap. ii., sect. 1.—The Nature, Design, and General Rules of our United Societies. 2. Of Class-meetings. 3. Of the Band-societies. 4. Of the Privileges granted to serious Persons who are not of our Church. 5. Of Marriage. 6. Of Dress. 7 Of bringing to Trial, finding guilty, reproving, suspending, or excluding disorderly Persons.

Chap. iii., sect. 1.—The Order for the Administration of the Lord's Supper. 2. The Administration of Baptism to Infants, and to such as are of riper Years. 3. Form of solemnizing Matrimony. 4. Order for the Burial of the Dead.

Chap. iv., sect. 1-3.—Form and Manner of ordaining Bishops, Elders, and Deacons.

Part ii., sect. 1.—Of the Boundaries of the Annual Conferences. 2. Of building Churches, and the Order to be observed therein. 3. Qualifications, Appointment, and Duties of Stewards. 4. Of the Allowance to the Ministers and Preachers, their Wives, Widows, and Children. 5. Of raising annual Supplies for the Propagation of the Gospel. 6. Support of Missions. 7. Of the Chartered Fund. 8. Of the Printing and Circulation of Books. 9. Of the Allowance to Local Preachers in given Cases. 10. Of Slavery.—The Notes are embodied in an Appendix.*

The next great exigency was the education of the young. A people like the American Methodists, so rapidly increasing in numbers, wealth, and influence, required not merely the aids of primary schools for their children, but foundations on a larger scale in which the constituents of secular education should be blended with the spirit and discipline of true Christianity. Already Mr. Asbury and the preachers had felt the need of this, and had often talked of undertaking the establishment of a high-school similar to that founded by Mr. Wesley at Kingswood, not restricted to the children of the preachers, but open to those of all Methodist and Christian parents who wished to avail themselves of such an accessory, in training their families on the principles which bear upon human welfare in the world that now is, and the world to come. Dr. Coke entered into the design with strong convictions of its necessity, and with larger views than those which had been entertained by Mr. Wesley. In a word, the Doctor wished, while they were about it, to organize a collegiate institution; and when the matter was brought before the Conference, they fully coincided with him, and resolved on measures to carry it into effect. An active subscription in the course of the year furnished adequate funds

* A bishop of the Church, Dr. Osmon Baker, has recently published "A Guide-Book to the Discipline." Carlton, New-York.

for the commencement of the undertaking. Coke and Asbury collected, themselves, nearly 5,000 dollars. The site chosen for the institution was on a rising ground near Abingdon, twenty miles from Baltimore; of which the Doctor writes: "The situation delights me. There is not, I believe, a point of it from whence the eye has not a view of at least twenty miles; and in some parts the prospect extends even fifty miles. The water-part forms one of the most beautiful views in the United States; the Chesapeake Bay in all its grandeur, with a fine navigable river, the Susquehanna, which empties itself into it, lying exposed to the sight through a great extent of country." Upon this favoured spot rose the noble building of Cokesbury College. In the Life of Asbury we read that on "the 5th of June, 1785, a large concourse of people were assembled on the eminence to witness the ceremony of laying the corner-stone." Mr. Asbury had been selected as the orator for the occasion. Attired in gown and bands, the pioneer-bishop of America took his position on the walls of the college, and announced for his text the following words:—The "sayings of old: which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength, and His wonderful works that He hath done. For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments." The institution, when completed, was opened in the December of the following year, under the presidency of the Rev. Mr. Heath, with a suitable faculty of instructors. The course of study included English, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, with the German and French languages. The religious element strongly reigned. A sound principle was

adopted in relation to the choice of text-books: "In teaching the languages, care shall be taken to read those authors, and those only, who join the purity, strength, and elegance of their several tongues; and the utmost caution shall be used that nothing immodest shall be found in any of our books. But this is not all. We shall take care that our books be not only inoffensive, but useful; that they contain as much strong sense and genuine morality as possible. As far, therefore, as is consistent with this principle, a choice and universal library shall be provided for the use of the students."

Cokesbury College, which ten years afterwards was destroyed by fire, was the first of a series of great efforts by the Methodist Church on that side of the water for the advancement of knowledge and religion by scholastic agencies. Another college was speedily founded in Baltimore; and a third, with the name of the Bethel Academy, in Christian county. The Conference of New-York instituted another seminary in that city in 1819; and since that time high-schools, colleges, and universities have grown up under Methodist patronage in all parts of the United States. In connexion, too, with their missionary operations, schools have been established among the Indians of their own country, and the native tribes of Africa.

But it was chiefly in doing the work of an evangelist and pastor, that the Doctor filled up his laborious days in America. His journal is crowded with the records of these hallowed toils.

"Baltimore, February 26th to March 6th.—The work of God does indeed prosper in this town. The preaching-house will not contain even my week-day's congregations, and at five in the morning the chapel is half full. I think I have prevailed on our friends to build a new church. They have already subscribed about £500 sterling. I have formed the believers into bands." From Baltimore he departed on long journeys, occupied with daily preaching and the cares of the new superintendency. The inclement season rendered these travels severely trying; yet he often found a charm in the

winter-scenery of the country. "In my ride this morning to Alexandria through the woods, I have had one of the most romantic sights I ever beheld. Yesterday there was a very heavy fall of snow, with hail and sleet. The fall of sleet was so great that the trees seemed to be trees of ice." This appearance of the American woods in a frost has been vividly described by a more recent Methodist preacher: "The woods seem one vast palace almost too dazzling to behold, the work of an enchanter's spell." On such days the forests look "as if some celestial power had converted all vegetable forms into crystals, emeralds, sapphires, and diamonds. The branches, twigs, and trunks of trees, the spray of bushes, the stem of herbs, and blades of grass, are all coated with ice, and wave and rustle in the breeze, and glisten in the sun."* "So beautiful a sight," adds the Doctor, "I never saw before."

"March 8th.—This day I lost my way in the woods; and, after riding ten miles out of my road, found an hospitable tavern-keeper, who entertained me and my horse gratis.

"Sunday.—We crossed a dangerous ford, where a man was lately drowned. The river was rather full, but I followed the foremost, and we got safe over. I preached at noon. Friday, according to my plan, I was to preach at Royster's church at noon. After riding about twenty-five miles, I got, as I found afterwards, within a furlong of the church; but the building being out of sight in an immense forest, and the path hardly trodden, and having no guide, I rode about eighteen miles more backwards and forwards, and found it at last by the direction of a planter, whose plantation was the only one I saw for some hours. There was nobody to be seen. I returned to the planter's, who gave me and my horse some refreshment, and recommended me to go to one Captain Philips, a Methodist, about five miles off. After travelling till nine at night, and expecting I should be obliged to take up my lodging in the woods, with the assistance of two Negroes

* "Watchman's" Review of Milburn's "Ten Years of a Preacher's Life."

I found out the house....Our brother Philps and several friends intended to set off the next morning for a Quarterly-meeting about sixteen miles distant. Their Quarterly-meetings on this continent are much attended to. The brethren for twenty and sometimes thirty or forty miles round meet together. All the travelling preachers in the Circuit are present; and they, with perhaps a local preacher or two, give the people a sermon one after another, besides the lovefeast, and (now) the sacrament. On Saturday, 9th, I set off with the friends to brother Martin's, in whose barn I preached that day. The next day, administered the sacrament to a large company, and preached;...and published to preach in the neighbourhood the three following days."

In fording the rivers he sometimes had to encounter formidable danger, and on one occasion was in extreme peril.

"Wednesday, March 9th.—We had this day a sudden thaw. I had two runs of water to cross between Alexandria and Colchester, which swell exceedingly on a thaw or fall of rain; but, being desirous to get into the work, I determined to proceed....A friend came with me over the first run, and informed me I could easily cross the second if I crossed the first. When I came to the second,* which was two hours after, I found that I had two streams to pass. The first I went over without much danger; but in crossing the second, which was very strong and deep, I did not observe that a tree, brought down by the flood, lay across the landing-place. I endeavoured, but in vain, to drive my horse against the stream, and go round the tree. I was afraid to turn the horse's head to the stream, and afraid to go back. In this dilemma I thought it best to lay hold on the tree and go over it, the water being shallow on the other side. But I did not advert to the danger of loosening the tree from its hold. For no sooner did I execute my purpose, so far as to lay hold of the tree, (and at that instant the horse was carried from

* The Akatinke.

under me,) but the motion that I gave it loosened it, and down the stream it carried me. Some distance off there grew a tree in the middle of the stream, the root of which had formed a little bank or island, and divided the stream; and here the tree which I held was stopped. Instantly there came down with the flood a large branch of a tree upon my back, which was so heavy that I was afraid it would break my back. I was now jammed up for a considerable time, (a few minutes seeming long at such a season,) expecting that my strength would soon be exhausted, and I should drop between the tree and the branch. Here I pleaded aloud with God in good earnest. One promise which I particularly urged I remember well: 'Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world.' I felt no fear at all of the pain of dying, or of death itself, or of hell; and yet I found an unwillingness to die. All my castles which I had built in the air, for the benefit of my fellow-creatures, passed in regular array before my mind, and I could not consent to give them up. It was an awful time. However, through the blessing of my almighty Preserver, to whom be all the glory, I at last got my knee (which I had long endeavoured at in vain) on the tree which I grasped, and then soon disengaged myself, and climbed up the little bank. Here I panted for breath for some time: and when I recovered, perceiving the water between the little island and the shore not to be very deep or strong, I ventured through it, and got to land. I was now obliged to walk about a mile, shivering, before I came to a house. The master and mistress were from home, and not expected to return that night. But the principal Negro lent me an old ragged shirt, coat, waistcoat, &c.; and the Negroes made a large fire, and hung up my clothes to dry all night. Before bed-time a man who came to the run on a small horse, and perceived mine near the brook, concluded the rider was drowned; and, wanting to cross the stream on urgent business, mounted my horse, and, being well acquainted with the run, came over safe. He then perceived the footsteps of a person on the side of the water,

and concluded they were made by the person to whom the horse belonged ; and, following the track, brought horse and bags safe to me. As he seemed to be a poor man, I gave him half-a-guinea. At night I lay on a bed on the ground, and, my strength having been so exhausted, slept soundly all night.*

“On Thursday I got to Fredericksburg. I now began to find that I could say, with the apostle, ‘I know how to want, and how to abound ;’ for I had advanced so much money to pay for the Minutes of Conference, the sermon on the Godhead of Christ, and towards the binding of the Prayer-Books, that my finances were got very low. This evening, as I was on the road, I asked a man the way, and whether there was any inn near : he told me there was one on the other side of the wood, and that he was the landlord. I found him a decent man, and gave him some little books ; and he gave me entertainment for myself and horse gratis.

“Wednesday, 11th.—Rode through the heavy rains to a church in a forest where I was engaged to preach. Everybody told me that no one would come on such a day ; and I found it true. So, after being wetted to the skin, and the very linen in my saddle-bags drenched with rain, we rode to the house of a kind physician, who gave us a very hospitable reception. On Thursday I preached in a church about fifteen miles from the place, to an attentive congregation.

“Monday, 23d.—After the falling of heavy rains, I set off. Met with many difficulties. In crossing the water in one place, to reach the bridge under which the main stream ran, the water was above the top of my boot. In another place, where we endeavoured to drive our horses over the run, the bridge being broke, we were likely to lose our beasts ; the stream being too strong for them, and carrying them down. At last we got them out, and with great labour and some

* It is a curious circumstance that Mr. Wesley at or about this time, as I have been informed by one who knew him, had a dream, in which he saw Dr. Coke struggling in a swelling flood.

danger patched up the broken bridge with the loose boards, and got over with our horses safe. After riding about forty miles, it grew so dark, and our horses and selves were so fatigued, that we lay at an inn upon the road, though within five miles of our friend's house where we intended to lodge.

"On Wednesday, 25th, set off.....After many doubts, and, I confess, with trembling, I was prevailed upon to walk over a long pine-tree which lay across a strong and deep stream of water, in which I must have been inevitably drowned if my foot had slipped. A man went before, leading me by the hand. But here, as everywhere, the Lord was at my right hand, that I should not fall. On this day I crossed the very same run of water where that awful scene happened, which, I trust, through the blessing of God, I shall never forget. Reached Alexandria about seven in the evening. Here I met Mr. Asbury. He had informed the people that when I arrived the court-house bell should ring; and about eight o'clock I had a very large congregation."

In the course of these primitive ministrations Dr. Coke found himself brought face to face with an evil which stands out as a fatal contradiction to the theoretic freedom of the American Republic,—the enslavement of our fellow-men; and, like St. Paul at Athens, when his spirit was stirred by the glaring revelations of idolatry, he felt himself constrained, by all that was English and Christian in his soul, to bear his testimony against it. About slavery itself I need not trouble the reader with any wordy diatribe. The voice of the civilized world has long ago pronounced the irreversible verdict which stamps it with condemnation and infamy; and the loathing with which all the great nations of the earth regard it is equally participated, among the American people themselves, by millions who long for the day when this demoralizing and perilous anomaly shall disappear from among them, and the black bar-sinister of compulsory bondage shall no longer disfigure the otherwise untarnished standard of the Trans-

atlantic States. Let it not, however, be forgotten, that the infamy of this foul blot is traceable to an English origin : for “the evil was entailed on the Americans by the measures of the mother-country, during the period of colonial dependence. The colonies made repeated efforts to prevent the importation of slaves, but could not obtain the consent of the British government.” * And when the struggle for the abolition of the slave-trade was entered upon among ourselves, it was from Englishmen that Wilberforce and Clarkson met with their opponents. The efforts, however, which our own times have witnessed for the reparation of those errors, are matter of history. At the period of which I now write the mind and heart of English Christianity were beginning to move in good earnest for the abolition of slavery in our colonies, and the exhibition of a protest against that maintained in America. Into these movements the Methodists entered with a deep-felt interest. No man ever spoke more true or forcible words than those with which their Founder himself denounced the evil, or demanded the redress; † and before Mr. Wilberforce had broken ground in the senate, the preachers had been his pioneers among the masses of the people. “O, what a feast to the heart,” exclaims Bradburn, in 1792, “to behold even in imagination the arrival of the long-wished period when the trade in human beings shall be no more! And that time will come, the blessed time when the wicked slave-dealers shall cease from troubling, and the weary African be at rest..... Slavery is contrary to the genius and design of the Gospel, and to the letter of the New Testament. Therein the apostle to the Gentiles ranks ‘men-stealers,’ that is, slave-dealers of every kind, with the vilest of criminals. (1 Tim. i. 9, 10.) Join, then, your neighbours in petitioning the Parliament to abolish the slave-trade. Pray earnestly to God Almighty that it may be immediately and effectually done away; and abstain from

* See Walsh’s “Appeal from the Judgment of Great Britain.” Philadelphia, 1819.

† See Note 12.

the use of rum and sugar, till its abolition be complete, and the slaves set free.” *

The American Methodists in general reciprocated these sentiments. So far back as 1780 the preachers had begun to take action in the matter, as appears by the following Minute: —“Ques. Does this Conference acknowledge that slavery is contrary to the laws of God, man, and nature, and hurtful to society; contrary to the dictates of conscience and religion; and doing that which we would not that others should do to us and ours? Do we pass our disapprobation on all our friends who keep slaves, and advise their freedom? Ans. Yes.” Three years after, they ask, “What shall be done with our local preachers who hold slaves, contrary to the laws, which authorize their freedom in any of the United States? Ans. We will try them another year. In the mean time let every assistant deal faithfully and plainly with every one, and report to the next Conference. It may then be necessary to suspend them.” And in 1784, when the Church was organized: “Ques. What shall we do with our local preachers who will not emancipate their slaves in the states where the laws permit it? Ans. Try those in Virginia another year, and suspend the preachers in Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, and New-Jersey.—Ques. What shall be done with our travelling preachers that now are, or hereafter shall be, possessed of slaves, and refuse to manumit them where the law permits? Ans. Employ them no more.—Ques. What methods can we take to extirpate slavery? Ans. We are deeply conscious of the impropriety of making new terms of communion for a religious Society already established, excepting on the most pressing occasion: and such we esteem the practice of holding our fellow-creatures in slavery. We view it as contrary to the golden law of God, on which hang all the law and the prophets, and [to] the inalienable rights of mankind, as well as every principle of the Revolution, to hold in

* “Address to the People called Methodists, concerning the Wickedness of encouraging Slavery.”

the deepest debasement, in a more abject slavery than is, perhaps, to be found in any part of the world except America, so many souls that are capable of the image of God." Whereupon it is enacted, 1. That every member emancipate his slaves between the ages of forty and forty-five within twelve months; and every other slave in a gradation of time corresponding. 2. A register of such manumissions shall be kept in each Circuit. 3. Recusants to be excluded from the Church. 4. No person henceforth to be admissible who is unwilling to comply with the condition. Buyers and sellers of slaves to be expelled.

But now came a dilemma. The Church ordained one thing, and the State another. These church-rules clashed with the laws of the country, which prohibited the emancipation demanded by the Conference. So, in 1785, it was perforce "resolved to suspend the execution of the rule for the present." The Conference, however, still expressed the deepest abhorrence of the practice, and a determination to seek its destruction by all wise and prudent means. In the Discipline, 1796, all office-bearers are required to give security for the emancipation of their slaves, either immediately or gradually, as the laws of the states and the circumstances of the case will admit; and 2. That no slaveholder shall be admitted to the Society, until the preacher has spoken to him freely and faithfully on the subject. In 1800, "When any travelling preacher becomes the owner of a slave by any means, he shall forfeit his ministerial character." In 1816, "No slaveholder shall be eligible to the office of an elder."

The present state of feeling in the Methodist Episcopal Church of the Northern States may be gathered from the resolution of the General Conference of 1856:—"We declare we are as much as ever convinced of the great evil of slavery. We believe that all men by nature have an equal right to freedom; and that no man has a moral right to hold a fellow-being as property: therefore no slaveholder shall be eligible to membership in our Church hereafter, where emancipation

can be effected. But, inasmuch as persons may be brought into the legal relation of slaveholders involuntarily, or voluntarily by purchasing slaves in order to free them ; therefore the merely legal relation shall not be considered, of itself, sufficient to exclude a person who may sustain it from the fellowship of the Church."

We see, then, that the ministers of this great North-American communion are as true as ever to the traditions of their fathers on the momentous question of slavery. But it is to be lamented that the Methodists of the Southern States have not permitted the action of these principles among them ; and, indeed, have been so opposed to the abolition of slavery as to separate, as a Church, from their brethren of the Northern States. The attitude of the latter stands out, on this account, in stronger and nobler relief. No religious communion has a higher or stronger conviction of the iniquity of the slave-system than they ; and all who know the course they have pursued in relation to it, know it to be such as commands the confidence of freemen, and strengthens the long-tried hopes of the bound.

While, too, they have taken this strong ground in reference to the emancipation of the slaves, they have been zealously mindful of their spiritual and moral improvement. More than two hundred thousand slaves are members of the Church. We must say, too, for the Southern Methodists, that, while they hold the slave in bondage, they do try to make him a Christian. They employ at present one hundred and forty-five missionaries, who are exclusively devoted to that work, and who "amidst the destructive malaria of river-swamps, and the consuming heat of rice and cotton fields, are seeking the spiritual welfare of the Negroes in bondage, and of their children. Both in the North and South there are African churches, schools, preachers and class-leaders, deacons and missionaries ; and thus American Methodism, in its two sections, is diffusing Christian principles among the white and the coloured population, among the masters and their slaves ;

and, with the labours of the other Churches of Christ in the States, must not only mitigate the evils of slavery while it exists, but, if the Church be faithful to truth, most assuredly will eventually exterminate it." *

To return once more to Dr. Coke. When he first preached in America, slavery was in its full ascendant. The Negroes all over the continent had tyrants many, but scarcely a friend. It required then some amount of moral and physical courage to stand forth as the public opponent of this gigantic oppression; not on the carpets of drawing-rooms, or the floor of the House of Commons in London, but in presence of the evil itself, and in the teeth of the slaveholder on his own domain. Such, however, was the stand now taken by our Doctor. The duty pressed itself on him, and he accepted it without flinching, and fulfilled it with what I may call a gentle heroism, a simple-hearted, loving fidelity.

"Friday, May 13th.—Preached at Bent chapel, belonging to the Church of England. At night lodged at the house of Captain Dillard, a most hospitable man, and as kind to his Negroes as if they were white servants...And yet I could not beat into the head of that poor man the evil of keeping them in slavery, though he has read Mr. Wesley's 'Thoughts on Slavery' three times over. But his good wife is strongly on our side.

"Sunday, 15th.—Preached in a handsome church. A very large congregation. But when I enlarged to the Society on Negro slavery, the principal leader raged like a lion, and desired to withdraw from the Society. I took him at his word, and appointed that excellent man, brother Skelton, leader in his stead. When the Society came out of the church, they surrounded Skelton. 'And will you,' said they, 'set your slaves at liberty?' (He has many.) 'Yes,' says he, 'I believe that I shall.'

"Monday, 16th.—Preached to a most polite congregation

* Jobson's "American Methodism," p. 268.

at New-Glasgow, and lodged at Colonel M——'s. They gave me great attention. Colonel M—— acknowledged the force of my arguments concerning slavery, but, I saw, did not choose to take any active part, for fear of losing his popularity.

"Tuesday, 17th.—Preached in a court-house at noon. Dr. Hopkins brought me to his house. Here I found myself locked up in the midst of mountains,—a romantic scene. The wolves frequently come to our friend's fences at night, howling in an awful manner. At a distance was the Blue Ridge, an amazing chain of mountains. I prefer this country to any other part of America; it is so like Wales.

"Thursday, 19th.—Preached to a quiet congregation at brother Key's. He told me, as we rode together, that he was determined to emancipate his slaves, about twenty; though his miserable father, I suppose, will never give him any further assistance if he does.....I pushed on in the evening, with the intention of reaching his father's; but at nine o'clock at night was glad to take up my lodgings at a tavern, as I had a dangerous river to cross before I could get to Mr. Key's. Nor am I sorry that I did not go thither; for, when I called the next morning, I found that he had shut his door against the preachers, because he has eighty slaves.....I drank a little milk here, it being Friday; and, before I went away, cleared myself of the blood of the old man, which I perceived not a little pleased his pious wife."

In another place: "I had now a very little persecution. The testimony I bore against slave-holding provoked many to retire out of the barn," (where he had been preaching,) "and to combine to flog me, as they expressed it, as soon as I came out. A high-headed lady also went out, and told the rioters that she would give fifty pounds if they would give that little Doctor one hundred lashes. When I came out, they surrounded me, but had only power to talk. Brother Martin is a justice of the peace, and seized one of them; and Colonel Taylor, a fine strong man who has lately joined us, but is only half-awakened, was setting himself in a posture of fighting.

But God restrained the rage of the multitude. Our brother Martin has done gloriously; for he has fully and immediately emancipated fifteen slaves. And that sermon which made so much noise has so affected one of our brethren, Mr. Norton, that he came to brother Martin and desired him to draw up a proper instrument for the emancipation of his eight slaves. A brother whose name is Ragland has also emancipated one.

“Monday, 11th.—Preached at brother Baker’s. Here a mob came to meet me with staves and clubs. Their plan was to fall upon me as soon as I touched on the subject of slavery. I knew nothing of it till I had done; but, not seeing it my duty to touch on the subject here, their scheme was defeated..... Brother Kennon has emancipated twenty-two slaves. These are great sacrifices; for the slaves are worth thirty or forty pounds sterling each, and perhaps more.

“Mecklenburg County, Virginia, Saturday, 23d–25th.—Here I bore a public testimony against slavery. Thursday, 26th May.—Mr. Asbury and I set off for General Washington’s. We were engaged to dine there. The General’s seat is very elegant, built upon the river Potomac, for the improvement of the navigation of which he is carrying on some amazing plans. He received us very politely. He is quite the plain country-gentleman. After dinner we opened to him the grand business, presenting to him our petition (agreed upon by the late Conference) for the emancipation of the Negroes, and entreating his signature, if the eminence of his station did not render that inexpedient. He informed us that he was of our sentiments, and had signified his thoughts on the subject to most of the great men of the state; that he did not see it proper to sign the petition; but, if the Assembly took it into consideration, he would signify his sentiments to the Assembly by a letter. He asked us to spend the evening and lodge at his house; but our engagement at Annapolis the following day would not admit of it. We returned that evening to Alexandria, where, at eight

o'clock, after the bell was rung, I had a considerable congregation."

Dr. Coke remained in America till the second day of June. On the 31st of May, after an extensive itinerancy, he arrived at Baltimore, to open before his departure the Conference which was about to assemble there. "In the evening I endeavoured to show the people the necessity of union with Christ. Wednesday, June 1st.—We opened our Conference. As I expected to sail the next day, my brethren were so kind as to sit till midnight. I endeavoured to show them the necessity of being faithful in the ministry of the word. We thought it prudent to suspend the minute concerning slavery, on account of the great opposition; our work being in too infantile a state to push things to extremity. However, we were agreeably informed that several of our friends in Maryland had already emancipated their slaves."

The following morning they again met early; and at eleven o'clock, at a public service, the Doctor gave them a farewell discourse on "St. Paul's awful exhortation to the elders of the church of Ephesus." He left them with a measure of those pains that friendship and love are liable to in this mortal life. "I think," says he, "for many years I have not felt myself so effeminate, shall I call it? as I did in parting from the preachers; and the sensation continued very painful for a considerable time." *

A boat was waiting, which took him down the river to the ship, which had dropped down the day before, and which he now joined in the evening. She bore a name of good omen, "The Olive-Branch." The Doctor found no other passenger on board for England. "So," writes he, "I have the state-room always to myself, and the cabin most part of the day; which is a blessed opportunity for fellowship with God, and for the improvement of my mind."

* The sentiment was reciprocal. In Asbury's journal we read: "Wednesday, June 1st.—Our Conference began. I was unwell. A blister and pain in my breast. On Thursday the Doctor took his leave. We parted with heavy hearts."

CHAPTER VII.

FIRST INTERVAL IN ENGLAND.

ARRIVED in London, Dr. Coke, in submitting to Mr. Wesley the details of his accomplished mission, had the consolation of finding that his proceedings in general were appreciated with approval by the Founder of Methodism. I say, consolation; because the pleasure he derived from Mr. Wesley's concurrence was not altogether unmixed with alloy. Among the Societies generally, the late transactions in America were regarded with great satisfaction; but in those Methodist circles where a more rigid attachment to the Church of England prevailed the case was somewhat different. Those families, deprecating anything that would tend to a separation from the Establishment, had a misgiving that by a similar procedure the Methodist body in England might be disintegrated from the mother-Church, and its ministers be constituted a kind of pseudo-hierarchy, in rivalry to that already in alliance with the State. This feeling received its most decisive expression from Mr. Charles Wesley. That charming poet and truly good man, though inspired with an ardent zeal for the salvation of souls, and one in heart with his brother in the evangelic impulses which had urged them both to labour for the like great object, did not possess that calm and unclouded sagacity, and that œcumenical grandeur of mind, which made his distinguished relative in religious matters the man of his own and coming ages. Of these two servants of God, the views of the one were restricted to the Church of England; the views of the other comprehended the wants of the world.* And yet Charles, with a fitful

* "The world is my parish."

inconsistency, excusable only in a poet, had been through all his public life violating his own theory. Thus while his brother, by a systematic attention to a principle, never kept a congregation from attending their parish-church, Charles, by preaching in church-hours in all sorts of unconsecrated places, had been doing the work of the veriest Dissenter in the land. He talked with imposing emphasis of the canons of the Church, and broke them as he listed; recognised in words and arguments the episcopal jurisdiction over the clergy, but in conduct disavowed its control; was ready to suffer martyrdom for the true episcopal succession, and lampooned its living representatives.

“ Master, for Thine we cannot own
The workmen who themselves create;
Their call receive from man alone,
As licensed servants of the state:
Who to themselves the honour take,
Nor tarry till Thy Spirit move;
But serve for filthy lucre’s sake
The souls they neither feed nor love.

“ In vain in their own lying words
The haughty self-deceivers trust;
The harvest’s and the vineyard’s lords
In vain their true succession boast.
Their lawful property they claim
The apostolic ministry;
But only labourers in name,
They prove they are not sent by Thee.

“ Venerable gamesters play,
Right venerable men;
Each contends the goodliest prey,
The largest share, to gain:
Eager each the whole to engross,
As churchmen never satisfied;
First they nail Him to the cross,
And then the spoils divide.”

Yet, steadfast to his theory of churchmanship, he seemed unwilling to suffer any man to break it but himself; and, when he learned that his brother had ordained Coke a bishop

for the Methodist communion in America, exclaimed in consternation, "I have lived on earth too long, who have lived to see this evil day!" With such sentiments, it is no wonder that he watched the practical unfoldings of the measure with a jealous eye, and felt great difficulty in according to the agent any other meed than that of censure.* So, on his return, the Doctor found himself assailed by the keen arrows of Charles Wesley's wit, in epigrams which, though dipped it may be in honey, had nevertheless the sharpness to create a smart. These little annoyances, however, were suffered with a Socratic resignation; but when Mr. Charles favoured the public at large with a pamphlet of "Strictures on Dr. Coke's Ordination Sermon preached at Baltimore, in the State of Maryland, in December, 1784," the Doctor felt himself bound in duty to reply as publicly, though with great respect to his venerable antagonist.

For having made an allusion in this sermon to the disadvantages of a union between Church and State, the author of the Strictures accuses Dr. Coke, that "as an Englishman he condemns the constitution of his country." A strange and rash assertion! "Nothing," says Coke, in reply to it, "nothing was farther from my thoughts. I am now, and ever have been, fully persuaded that a mixed monarchy is abundantly the best for the British empire, and that nothing is wanting to make our constitution most perfect in its kind, but a more equal representation of the people, and the dissociation of the union which now subsists between the Church and State. I love and reverence his present majesty, not only as my own sovereign, but as the best prince, I believe, upon earth; and I delight to pray for him both in public and private....A union formed by gracious inclinations, and supported by wholesome and impartial discipline, is the only Christian union that is consistent with the spirit of the Gospel.

* "Coke will now return from his 'Methodist Episcopal Church in Baltimore,' to make us all Dissenters here."

Churches founded on this basis naturally encourage the most liberal, the most catholic sentiments. Their evangelical union becomes, under God, their glory and their strength, and the blessed means of making converts out of the world. (John xvii. 20-23.)”

A second accusation in the *Strictures* was, that Dr. Coke, “as a clergyman, vilifies his brethren with the opprobrious names of parasites and hirelings.” He replies: “I totally deny the charge. The persons I am there describing, viz., very many of the American clergy before the war, were not my brethren. They were never called of God to the ministry, but were in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. ...There were, indeed, several among them, at whose feet I should think it an honour to sit; but in general they were as wretched a set as ever perhaps disgraced the church of God.”

The author of the *Strictures* adds, that “as a Methodist Dr. Coke contradicted the uniform declarations of the Rev. J. and C. Wesley respecting their adherence to the Church of England for near fifty years.” In answer, the Doctor shows that he did nothing in America but by a delegated power received from Mr. Wesley himself; for a vindication of whose conduct in making such appointments he refers to the circular letter of that venerable man, addressed to himself, to Mr. Asbury, and the American preachers, and reprinted in the *Minutes of Conference*.

Finally, the censor accuses him of “charging the preachers with gross duplicity and hypocrisy, by saying that they did in general constantly exhort the people to attend the service of the Church of England, from a full persuasion, drawn from experience, that there was no other alternative to preserve the Society but an adherence to that Church, or the formation of ourselves into an independent one.” But Coke explains that he was speaking only of the Methodists in America; and that so early as the year 1778 the people and preachers there were desirous of a separation, took large strides toward it,

and were only prevented by the opposition of Mr. Asbury, who averred to the Doctor that he himself was not even then against a separation abstractedly, but against the mode of it which was then taken, as being without the consent of Mr. Wesley. They pursued, therefore, the only method which remained for the preservation of the Society, as every other Church was united by particular terms of communion, a compliance with which would have drawn the members from their union with Methodism; and the Church of England in America was alone void of even the shadow of discipline. "Nor can I omit, that not 5,000 out of at least 100,000 adult hearers, who compose our Sunday's congregations in that part of the globe, ever attended any other ministry than ours. But now our congregations universally enjoy our excellent Liturgy and all the other ordinances, with everything that is truly good in the Church of England."

These are the main points of the debate between them. Mr. Charles Wesley had a short polemic also with his brother, on the same cause. The latter, in wishing to close it, writes: "I see no use in you and me, my dear brother, disputing together; for neither of us is likely to convince the other. You say I separate from the Church. I say I do not. There let it stand.

"Your verse is a sad truth. I see fifty times more of England than you do; and I find few exceptions to it.

"I believe Dr. Coke is as free from ambition as from covetousness. He had *done* nothing rashly that I know; but he has *spoken* rashly, which he retracted the moment I spoke to him of it....He is now such a right hand to me as Thomas Walsh was. If you will not or cannot help me yourself, do not hinder those who can and will. I must and will save as many souls as I can while I live, without being careful about what may possibly be when I die."

It should be added, in justice to the Rev. Charles Wesley, that in this correspondence with his brother he admits that the latter was a true bishop, in the New-Testament sense of

that title; and that, "as he drew near the close of life, he became less hostile to his brother's ordinations. As long as he was able to labour, he continued to serve the Methodist congregations with his wonted faithfulness. Within less than twelve months of his death, writing to his brother, he says, 'Stand to your own proposal. Let us agree to differ. I leave America and Scotland to your latest thoughts and recognitions....Keep your authority while you live; and after your death—*detur dignioribus.*' " *

Coke, who had neither time nor disposition for controversy, soon threw the pen aside, and hastened to fulfil his more true vocation in promoting, by his own, and by the agency of others, the universal proclamation of the Gospel of peace. The year he was now spending in England was almost entirely occupied in preaching the word, and in building up the Societies in many parts of the land. He did much work of this kind in Yorkshire and the north of England, and for the same purpose visited several towns in Scotland. And, while making known to immense crowds the lessons of the truth which was able to make them wise to salvation, he endeavoured to awaken in their bosoms those sentiments of mercy for the wants of the world at large which were daily exerting a more powerful influence in his own. These appeals he followed up by personal application, in public and private, for gifts and offerings to create a fund to be devoted exclusively to the new missionary enterprise. We may say *new*, in an emphatic sense; for at that time missionary zeal had but a faint and dubious existence, even among them who, in England itself, claimed to be considered as the representatives of Christianity. Thus we read in the biography of Marshman, that when, about this very time, at a meeting of ministers in Northamptonshire, the Rev. John Ryland, senior, called upon the younger preachers in the consistory to propose some topic

* "Let the choice fall on the more worthy." See Jackson's Life of Charles Wesley.

for discussion, and William Carey rose, and suggested for consideration, "the duty of Christians to attempt the spread of the Gospel among heathen nations," the proposition was received with astonishment, and the president spake out, "Sit down, young man, sit down! When God pleases to convert the heathen, He will do it, without your aid or mine." But in Dr. Coke's vivid appeals and heart-stirring exhortations there was now a voice heard in the desert, crying, "Prepare the way of the Lord." In his own soul great thoughts had been unfolding their power. The wretchedness of the multitudinous nations living in ignorance and sin, and dying in despair,—the grand but neglected provisions of the Gospel, which can save not a few, or many, but all who need them,—and the guiltily ignored obligations of duty incumbent on the drowsy and unfaithful churches at home to send its message of mercy to all the tribes of our race,—had risen before him with the light and awfulness of an apocalypse from God, and had given the final stamp to the character of his life. He had revolved the possibility of a mission to Africa for some time, and was now engaged in a correspondence with a gentleman in India, to elicit such information as he could give him, with a view to an attempt of the same nature in those vast regions.* But everything had yet to be commenced. He began by giving himself, and all that he had, to this Divine cause. Heaven honoured the oblation, and gave him the power to act with an effectual grace. The spark was kindled here and there, which has since brightened into a genial flame. With Africa and India in his view, he nevertheless felt that the season for action, which would come, was not yet; but that it was for him, and those who were beginning to co-operate with him, to follow the immediate leadings of Providence which pointed with a steady index to the western continent, to the sustentation and enlargement of the agencies so auspiciously at work among the colonists and aboriginal

* See a letter in the *Arminian Magazine* for 1792.

tribes of those far-stretching wildernesses, and especially the establishment of a Christian ministry in the more northerly parts of the continent in Canada and Newfoundland.

Meanwhile he literally traversed England from north to south, for the purpose which had taken the full sway of his life; since in one part of the year we find him at work in Scotland, and at another in the extreme limits of the kingdom, in the Norman Isles. In those pleasant spots Methodism had already begun to yield its firstfruits in return for the labours of Robert Carr Brackenbury, who had commenced his mission in Jersey three years before, under the circumstances we have detailed in the *Life of Dr. Adam Clarke*.* A seafaring man of Guernsey, who had heard Brackenbury preach in England, had invited him to that island; and in 1785 he opened his commission there with good effect. In January, 1786, Dr. Coke came over and preached in the ivy-covered church of St. Helier, as well as to the congregation which met in the "old religious house" where Mr. Brackenbury usually ministered. Accompanied by that zealous evangelist, Jean de Queteville, the Doctor passed over to Guernsey, where he organized the few who had received the word into a regular Society, and thus made sure the foundation of a work which in following years unfolded abundant blessings. Why did he make this visit to the Norman Isles? Because his attention had been drawn to them as an important key to missionary operations in France. He saw, in the political movements which had begun to shake as with the tremblings of an earthquake the structure of society, the presages of a change which would throw down existent hindrances to the introduction of the pure Gospel into that country; and he was wishful to create an agency which would be available when wanted at the hoped-for time. We see in his whole conduct a unity of purpose which makes his life sublime. Subsequent experience shows the correctness and wisdom of

* Vide also "*Raithby Hall*," by Mrs. Richard Smith, 1859.

his designs, as those islands have proved a nursery from which a succession of men have been prepared for missionary work among the French people. He ordained the first of these, William Mahy, with his own hands. M. de Queteville also, who laboured many years in the islands, received ordination from Dr. Coke.

Soon after returning from the islands, he crossed the other channel, and prosecuted an extensive tour in Ireland, which he completed by presiding at the Irish Conference; and shortly after joined Mr. Wesley at the Conference of the English preachers, held that year in Bristol, at which measures were adopted for the extension of the work in North America, which would render it necessary for him to prepare at once for another voyage across the Atlantic. So laboured on this faithful servant of Christ, retracing the footprints of the apostles, doing good service as to his Lord, ministering for them who should be heirs of salvation, and thus living the life of an angel of God.

CHAPTER VIII.

SECOND VOYAGE OUT.

ON the conclusion of the American war, a multitude of persons who were not disposed to renounce their allegiance to the British crown emigrated from the United States to Nova-Scotia. Among these loyalist families were some who had been connected with Methodism, and who, in the new land where Providence had cast their lot, expressed an earnest desire that Mr. Wesley should supply them with ministers. To gratify these wishes, and provide for the spiritual wants of a rapidly-increasing population, three preachers, Messrs. Hammet, Warrenner, and Clarke, were, at the Conference of 1786, appointed to labour in the Nova-Scotian peninsula; and Dr. Coke, on his route to a visitation of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States, was requested to accompany and introduce them to their untried sphere of duty.

They embarked at Gravesend on the 24th of September. Contrary winds kept them beating about between the Isle of Wight and the French coast for five days, and, on the 30th, obliged them to take shelter under the island; giving the Doctor an opportunity of spending three days among the Methodists of Portsmouth, to whom he preached on the Sunday morning, and in the evening to a large multitude in the open air on the common. "On Monday evening my congregation was larger than on the day before; when I endeavoured to lead the people to Christ by the star which the wise men saw in the east. On Tuesday evening I took my leave of that kind people, showing them the necessity of a death unto sin, and of having their lives hid with Christ

in God. After preaching we concluded with the Lord's Supper ; and our Lord did assuredly condescend to acknowledge His own sacred ordinance."

At midnight he embarked for the ship, which lay seven miles out. After rowing about two miles in the boisterous waves, the master of the commissioners' yacht, who was with him in the boat, advised him to desist from the attempt, and pass the remaining hours of darkness on board the yacht, which lay at her moorings not far off. This was done ; and after three hours' sleep he proceeded to the brig, still detained by the weather, which rose on the following day to a storm more violent than had been known on that coast for six years, and in the thunders of which they came into collision with a sloop, and were subsequently in danger of being themselves run down by a large frigate. It was not till the 12th of October that they saw the Land's End.

The Doctor was able to front the angry Atlantic in a calm and devout state of mind. " I esteem my little chamber a peculiar gift of God. It is taken out of the steerage, and is so far, on the one hand, from the common sailors, and, on the other, from the cabin-passengers, that all is still and quiet, and here I can be with God. Yesterday He was extraordinarily present with me, and did indeed pour out the consolations of His Spirit largely ; and streams of filial, penitential tears did, in an unusual manner, flow from my eyes. Blessed be His name, He does make it my *sanctum sanctorum*, filling it, my soul at least, with light and glory."

The outward temple, too, with its liquid pavement and azure heights, filled him at times with unspeakable solemnity, as the pavilion of the Omnipotent whose " way is in the sea," and " His path in the great waters." " Sunday, 22d.—I went on deck about half an hour before sunrise, and saw the most glorious sight I ever beheld, except once on my former voyage. The eastern sky was covered with a most beautiful canopy of purple, all over decorated with spangles of gold. The heavens did indeed declare the glory of God.

How ravishing the thought that He is mine! Twice to-day we read the Liturgy. In the morning I enlarged on the nature of repentance and justification; and brother Clarke in the afternoon gave a rousing sermon on the words of Pharaoh, 'Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?' When recovered from the first distresses of the sea, the three preachers ministered in turn with their superintendent to the passengers and crew. The latter kept aloof at first, but gradually lent a more willing ear. As to the Doctor, he says that he had become "sea-proof," and able to "devote the whole day to reading, writing, and religious exercises." Three or four hours a day he occupied in reading French. "Sometimes, for a little variety, I read Virgil; and every day a canto of Spenser, the English Virgil. I am astonished the writings of Spenser are not more read. His genius and imagination were amazing, and from his allegories may be extracted some of the most instructive lessons of religion. I grudge not the twenty shillings I gave for his works. With such company I think I could live comfortably in a tub."

But now, trying as the voyage had been at its outset, things began to grow worse. On the 24th, when half-way between the two continents, a leak was sprung, and the pumps called into active play. "The sailors this night for the first time joined us in evening prayer." On the night of the 27th a whirling tempest blew with a fury greater than the captain had known for ten years. The mainmast betrayed signs of weakness, and the axes were in readiness to cut it away, if needful. The leak increased. Wafted to the very confines of eternity, the Doctor had deep searchings of heart. Here is the result: "What reason have I to desire to live? I have really forsaken all for Christ, and have neither motive nor desire to live but for His church. Yet why should my desires be so strong on that account? With what perfect ease can the Lord fill up my province with one infinitely better qualified! I am therefore willing to die. I do love God, and have an indubitable assurance that whatever is

wanting He will fully supply, before He takes me into the world of spirits."

In this frame of mind he could preach with great power. "Sunday, 29th.—During Divine service, most of the sailors being present, I delivered my soul : insomuch that one of the passengers, a gay, irreligious young man, retired after the service and wrote me a letter, informing me that I was not his pastor, and insisting on receiving the usage which as a passenger and a gentleman he had a claim to. A few fair words brought him into a good humour."

In the following week the two mainstays of the mainmast gave way, and the tackling in general, by the strain of unbroken gales, was fast hastening to ruin. "Brother Clarke's hair falls off wonderfully; but he bears himself up with great courage, as do the other brethren." The discomforts of the voyage, from the tempestuous weather, were hugely increased by the surly tempers of the captain. This son of the waves appears to have been a thorough-going votary to a superstition not uncommon among seamen, that the presence of a clergyman brings bad luck to a ship's crew. The four black coats on board threw a gloom over the captain's feelings from the first, and with each successive disaster his sinister suspicions grew the more confirmed. The poor Doctor was regarded as a kind of evil genius, whose presence filled him with disquiet. His very prayers seemed to increase their danger; and the more Dr. Coke prayed, it was the captain's opinion the weather became worse. "We have a Jonah on board, that's plain enough," said he. These bad feelings rose with the storm, till one day, when the hurricane was at its height, and Coke was engaged in his cabin in earnest prayer, the poor man, in a frenzy of superstition, broke in, and, seizing some books and papers, threw them overboard. Then returning he laid hold of the Doctor, as if for the purpose of completing the sacrifice by sending him after them. Some remains of common sense, however, prevented his going to such a length of wickedness, and he

contented himself by administering sundry cuffs and shakes, which, though not very edifying to Coke, had the effect of giving some relief to the morbid feelings of his rough-handed visiter. Dr. Coke knew how to make allowance for the temptations of these hours of distress and trial, passed by the outrage with self-possession, and with a truly Christian kindness and delicacy forbore to make a record of it in his journal.

On Thursday the 30th the gale became awful. "At ten at night I heard the captain's wife crying out in the most dreadful fright; and presently one of the passengers came running, exclaiming, 'Pray for us, Doctor; for we are just gone!' I came out, and found that the ship in the hurricane was on her beam-ends. They were just going to cut away the mainmast. My brethren and self at this awful moment retired into a corner to pray; and I think I may say we all felt a perfect resignation to the will of God. Through grace I was entirely delivered from the fear of death. But brother Hammet was superior in faith to all of us. His first prayer, if it could be called by that name, was little short of a declaration of the full assurance he possessed that God would deliver us; and his second, a thanksgiving for our deliverance. It was not till after this, and we had sung a hymn together, that the foresail was shivered, and by that means the masts were saved, and probably the ship itself." The captain, in describing the paroxysm of the tempest, said, "It appeared at one time as if the clouds, the air, and the waves, were all commingled." They then drove before the stupendous gale with bare spars. On the night of Monday, December 4th, the storm seemed yet to gather new strength; and the ship, oozing at every joint, was as if in her last agony. A council was held. The captain expressed his despair of reaching Halifax; and the unanimous opinion was, that their only chance of safety, under God, was to go before the wind in the direction of the West Indies. As for three weeks they had gained only one hundred and twenty miles, provisions began

to fail, and a short allowance was agreed upon. "But," says the Doctor, "the greatest trial of all to me is the hardly having any candles remaining; but to the glory of God I can say, that to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. I have a strong persuasion we shall be driven to the West Indies." Eleven days afterwards they found their expectations verified. The weather gradually abated;

*Stella refulsit,
Defluit saxis agitatus humor;
Concidunt venti, fugiuntque nubes,
Et minax, sic Dî voluere, ponto
Unda recumbit;*

the clouds broke away in dissolving forms of beauty; a splendid tropic bird floated in the air before the ship, as if to welcome them to its own region; and the shattered bark, on the gentle ripples of the Caribbean seas, bore them to a grateful though unexpected haven in Antigua, on the Feast of the Nativity,—a day of good omen to those islands of the West, for whose sable myriads, fast bound in the shadows of death, it brought the messengers of their redemption for time and eternity. No man on that morning could form a presage of the great results which were to accrue from this unlooked-for visit; but could we who live in later days, and witness its developing consequences, have heard the notes of the first hymn of the congregation who gathered round the missionaries, we should have discerned the echo of the birth-song of the Great Deliverer, when "suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

CHAPTER IX.

THE WESTERN INDIES.

IN the island to which their course had been so undesignedly driven, our missionaries found a people already prepared of the Lord. Methodism, which has since then yielded such precious fruitage among the mountains and vales of those isles of the sun, had some years before been introduced into Antigua by the zeal of a gentleman of high standing in the colony, Mr. Nathaniel Gilbert, Speaker of the House of Assembly. This eminent civilian, in a visit to England, became acquainted with Mr. Wesley. With a constitution impaired by a long residence within the tropics, he had been led to entertain those serious thoughts of a wasting life and an opening eternity, which disposed him to welcome the hopes of the Gospel which he heard from that servant of God, to be persuaded of them, and embrace them, confessing himself one of those strangers and pilgrims on the earth, who, saying such things, declare plainly that they seek a country.* Nor did these sentiments fade away, when, with recruited health, he returned to Antigua; but forthwith he began himself to call sinners to repentance. This unusual procedure excited a good deal of attention among all ranks of the island-community. The rich and the poor met together, and heard, in his unaffected and manly statements of the truth, the doctrines of the glorious Gospel, which became to some of them the tidings of life, though to others a message rejected with contempt. More especially was it the case when Mr. Gilbert enlarged the plan of his operations so as to embrace the Negro

* Heb. xi. 14. See note 13.

population. It was a sufficient shock to the prejudices of caste for the chief magistrate of the island to make his appearance as a Methodist preacher ; but to gather whole congregations of Negroes, and busy himself in disturbing their long-settled condition by chimerical schemes of improving them, was a misdemeanour which exposed him to a torrent of reproach. Still he went forward ; and the Divine blessing so came on his endeavours, that nearly two hundred of the sable outcasts were gathered into the fold of Jesus, and made heirs together with himself of the grace of life.

The good work thus begun was strengthened, after the decease of Mr. Gilbert, by the self-denying and exemplary efforts of Mr. John Baxter, a man of good standing in the royal dockyard-establishment at Antigua ; who, for some years before his arrival in that island, had been a class-leader and local preacher at Chatham. He found the poor flock as sheep without a shepherd, and mainly kept together by two good black women, who held meetings for prayer after the slaves had done their daily toils. Mr. Baxter commenced a course of preaching, which was attended by increasing numbers both of Negroes and white people ; and for eight years before the arrival of Dr. Coke devoted all the time he could secure to these disinterested ministrations. After five years he had the satisfaction of completing the first Methodist chapel erected in the Torrid Zone ; and in various neighbourhoods in the island congregations had been collected, and two thousand persons united in Society. This true servant of Jesus Christ wanted the formality of ecclesiastical ordination ; but that defect was after awhile supplied by Dr. Coke, when Mr. Baxter, renouncing a lucrative situation under the Government, dedicated himself entirely for his remaining days to the sacred office. These statements will explain the allusions in the short extracts I can allow myself to make from the journal.

“ December 25th.—This day we landed in Antigua ; and in going up the town of St. John’s we met brother Baxter in his band going to perform Divine service. After a little refresh-

ment I went to our chapel, and read prayers, preached, and administered the sacrament. I had one of the cleanest audiences I ever saw. All the Negro women were dressed in white linen gowns, petticoats, handkerchiefs, and caps; and the men as neatly. In the afternoon and evening I had very large congregations.

“January 5th, 1787.—I have preached in this town twice a day; the house full half an hour before the time. Our Society in this island is near two thousand; but the ladies and gentlemen of the town have so filled the house, that the poor dear Negroes who built it have been almost entirely shut out, except in the mornings. Yet they bear this, not only with patience, but with joy.....The country is romantic; the cocoa-tree magnificent. Everything is new. Last week my brethren and self were invited by the company of merchants to dine with Prince William Henry.* To-day a gentleman with whom I had dined intimated that, if five hundred pounds a year would detain me in the island, I should not leave it. God be praised, five hundred thousand a year would be to me a feather, when opposed to my usefulness in the church of Christ.”

It was now that openings began to appear in the other islands. An invitation came from St. Vincent's, another from St. Eustatius, and a third from St. Christopher's. The missionaries held a little Conference, and decided that Messrs. Hammet and Clarke should accompany the Doctor to St. Vincent's, while Mr. Warrener continued in Antigua.

Furnished with introductory letters, the brethren set forth on their voyage on the 6th of January, and Mr. Baxter went with them. Touching the next night at Dominica, Dr. Coke landed with Mr. Baxter for the purpose of seeing Mr. Burn, a planter, of whom he had heard, as being willing to encourage a mission in the island. “After walking a quarter

* Afterwards William IV. He was at that time commanding a frigate on the West India station.

of a mile we came to a little river, which we waded; and on calling upon Mr. Burn, he received and entertained us courteously, with the assurance that he should be glad to entertain the minister whenever he could visit his estate; that there were about four hundred Negroes in the neighbourhood, and he had no doubt that the adjoining planters would give us the same encouragement." At Roseau, on the following day, a large congregation heard the word of God. On Thursday they were at St. Vincent's. A gentleman named Claxton, who had been awakened under Mr. Gilbert, and had met in class with him, received them with hearty joy. "He has much of the spirit of a Methodist, and his wife fears God. The evening after we landed we preached in his house to a large congregation." On a tour in the country he met with equal welcome from other planters, one of whom showed him a large room which he was willing at once to appropriate for religious services. Mr. Claxton also on their return had fitted up a spacious warehouse as a chapel; and, learning that the Doctor had decided on leaving Mr. Clarke in the island, he assigned him a study and bed-room in his own house. Among the chief people of the town, several promised them their concurrence and support. Six of them already offered themselves as members of the Society. The poor Negroes, understanding what was going on, gave characteristic expression to their joy. "These men," said they, "have been imported for us." Under these circumstances Dr. Coke considered that the will of God, in the appointment of a missionary to St. Vincent's, had a revelation "as clear as if it had been written with a sunbeam."

On returning to Dominica they had an interview with the governor, who, with another gentleman of high standing in the island, expressed entire approval of their designs, and promised his protection. At St. Christopher's they found that preparations had been already made to receive them, and crowds of all ranks assembled to hear the opening of their commission. At Nevis they received many polite attentions, but did not find at that time the same countenance given to

their purpose which in after-days was not withheld. Touching again at St. Christopher's, they preached in the courthouse to crowded audiences ; and, with the friendly concurrence of the principal inhabitants and the clergyman of the parish, Mr. Hammet was designated as the stationed missionary.

They next sailed for the Dutch island of St. Eustatius. Here they met with several Negroes who had been brought to the Lord by a brother slave named Harry, who, when imported from America, had brought in the sanctified vase of a renewed heart the precious treasure of the Gospel, which he earnestly sought to communicate to his fellows. They heard him willingly ; and some, touched by the word, gave their hearts and hands to Jesus. These men had constructed an humble sanctuary, where they had been in the habit of assembling for worship. Such power attended Harry's preaching, that numbers in the sable congregation were seized with physical affections like those which sometimes attended Mr. Wesley's ministry among the colliers, and which in our own time have excited such attention in the north of Ireland. These irregularities had reached the ears of the governor, and Harry had been forbidden to preach, under penalty of a flogging. Constrained by his desire to do good, he broke through the prohibition by praying with the people, and submitted, like a martyr, to the lash. Proving incorrigible, he was at length transported from the island. Dr. Coke, on landing, found some of these Negroes waiting for their arrival. They had fitted up a cottage for them, and contributed from their humble means toward the defrayment of their expenses. All this gave great delight to the Doctor, who, however, would not comply with their eager request to solemnize a public service, till he had waited on the Dutch governor. By this functionary he was informed that he must be silent till their credentials had been examined by the court. The investigation was so far favourable, that on the following Sunday he was permitted to preach. But no decisive steps could be taken for the establishment of a mission till a time more

propitious should arrive. Meanwhile he formed the pious Negroes into six classes, the nucleus of a future church.

His visit to these islands made a very pleasant impression on Dr. Coke. He was delighted with their natural scenery, their blue mountains, and overhanging rocks; their luxuriant plantations, and shadowed forests, and bright tropical flowers. The genial spirit, too, of a number of persons with whom he had met in social and religious intercourse, found a full response in his own friendly heart; and, above all, the prospect of rendering these beautiful scenes more beautiful by the adornments of religion gave him a consolation which only such as he can understand.

It was now time to set his face toward the continent; and, finding a Dutch vessel at St. Eustatius bound for Charleston, he secured a passage. Coke says that he embarked (the 10th of February) laden with seed-cakes, sweet biscuits, oranges, bottles of jelly, *et cetera*, heaped upon him in such profusion by his black friends, that, though he made his seven fellow-passengers sharers of them, they had not consumed half of them when the voyage ended. The passage of eighteen days was rendered the more pleasant by the quiet and orderly habits of the crew, with whom, it appeared, it was a rule of the worthy captain to read a portion of the Scriptures night and morning; a practice not uncommon in those days among the maritime people of Holland. At Charleston the Doctor opened the new Methodist church, and held a Conference, before whom he preached a sermon on the qualifications and duties of deacons. He had the satisfaction of learning from the preachers how rapidly the work of God was advancing in that and the neighbouring states. He then himself took the field, and, supplied with a good strong horse by Mr. Asbury, made long journeys through Georgia, South Carolina, and Virginia, "visiting and confirming the churches." Travelling at that time had scarcely gone beyond the most primitive methods of locomotion; and, as to roads, in many parts the itinerant had literally to find a way, or make one. "The preachers,"

says the Doctor, "ride here about a hundred miles a week ; but the swamps and morasses they have to pass through it is tremendous to relate. Though it is now the month of April, I was above my knees in water on horseback in passing through a deep morass, and that when it was almost dark.... In travelling our rides are so long that we are frequently on horseback till midnight." Yet he kept in good spirits. "I have got into my old romantic way of life, preaching in the midst of great forests, with scores and sometimes hundreds of horses tied to the trees ; a sight which adds much interest to the scene." With Bishop Asbury he rode three hundred miles in one week, preaching, alternately, every day. In the course of these ministrations, the Doctor was more temperate on the slavery question than when last in America ; persuaded that moderation at that particular time would do more good than exuberant zeal. He thought that, as the Gospel took hold of the people, it would create those liberal ideas and feelings which would eventually produce the desired effect. "I am now informed that soon after I left this county, [Halifax,] on my former tour, a bill was presented against me as a seditious person before the grand jury, and was found by the jury... Many of the people, I find, imagined that I would not venture among them again. However, when I came, they all received me with perfect quietness ; and my visit, I have reason to believe, was made a blessing to many. Indeed, I now acknowledge that, however just my sentiments may be concerning slavery, it was ill-judged of me to deliver them from the pulpit. A man who pursued me with a gun to shoot me, when in this neighbourhood before, (a circumstance then secreted from me,) is now converted to God, and become a member of the Society." In Mecklenburg county he held a second Conference. "On the Lord's day, though there was no town within a great many miles of the spot, I think there were about four thousand hearers. We here ordained five deacons in public, and it was a very solemn and profitable time." The great cathedral of the woods, with their Gothic

arches of outspread boughs, had never echoed, we dare say, with an ordination-hymn before. "One circumstance at this Conference gave me great pleasure. Brother Hawes, one of our elders, who last year was sent with a preacher into Kentucky, wrote us a most enlivening account of the prospect in his district, and earnestly implored some further assistance. 'But observe,' he adds, 'no one must be appointed to this country who is afraid to die; for there is now war with the Indians, who frequently shoot the travellers and scalp them; and we have one Society on the very frontiers of the Indian country.' After this letter was read, a blessed young man, brother Williamson, offered himself as a volunteer. What can we not do, or suffer, when the love of Christ constrains?"

Asbury and Coke then worked their way round through Richmond to Alexandria, and thence to Baltimore, where the third Conference commenced on the 2d of April. In the two former Conferences Dr. Coke had perceived some coldness and jealousy towards himself among the preachers, which now took a more apparent form. They had entertained an idea that he was disposed to exceed his legitimate powers, alleging, among other instances, that while in England he had altered on his own authority the time and place for the Conference to meet, after those points had been determined by the Conference itself. To this complaint the Doctor paid a respectful attention; and, to allay all apprehensions of a similar infringement in the future, he drew up a definite pledge to be recorded in the register, to the following effect:—

"I do solemnly engage by this instrument, that I never will, by virtue of my office as superintendent of the Methodist Church, during my absence from the United States of America, exercise any government whatever in said Methodist Church. And I do also engage that I will exercise no privilege in the said Church when present, except that of ordaining according to the regulations and laws already existing or hereafter to be made in said Church, and that of presiding when

present in Conference, and, lastly, that of travelling at large. Given under my hand the second day of May in the year 1787

“THOMAS COKE.”

An historian of the American Methodist Church remarks on this transaction, that it shows the vigilance with which the preachers watched over their rights. “But,” adds he, “it shows likewise the Christian spirit by which Dr. Coke was actuated in his intercourse with his American brethren; the respect he entertained for Bishop Asbury, his junior in office, in yielding to him, on account of his more intimate acquaintance with the preachers and people, the power of stationing the ministers; as well as his readiness to conciliate all by a frank acknowledgment of his error in the assumption of power which did not belong to him. Dr. Coke was, like all other men, too fallible not to err; but too good to persist in an error after being made aware of it.”*

Here, however, we should remark, that the change in the time of holding the Conference had not been made by Dr. Coke by his own wish, but by that of Mr. Wesley, who, in a letter of September 6th, 1786, had written to him to this effect:—

“I desire that you would appoint a General Conference of all our preachers in the United States to meet at Baltimore on May the 1st, 1787 And that Mr. Richard Whatcoat may be appointed superintendent, with Mr. Francis Asbury.”

This order, unlooked for by the American preachers, gave many of them great inconvenience, and prevented others from attending the Conference at all. They began to feel that, however great their reverence for Mr. Wesley might be, his unavoidable ignorance of their local affairs, at a distance of three thousand miles, would render his absolute dictatorship over their movements a not infrequent cause of inconveni-

* Bangs's History, vol. i., p. 258.

ences, and would make it necessary for them to claim the right of an untrammelled action in their own affairs. At the Conference of 1784 they had recorded a declaration that "during the life of Mr. Wesley they were ready to obey his commands in matters belonging to church-government." But, to indicate that such a pledge must not be considered as applying to all the minute details of their connexional movements, the sentence was henceforth omitted from their printed Minutes.

So, with respect to the appointment of Mr. Whatcoat to the superintendency, they considered that it would be their duty to decline it for the present time, in assertion of the right which Mr. Wesley himself had given them to elect their own superintendents. In the Prayer-Book which he had sent them, their possession of such an elective power was plainly expressed. In the office for the ordination of superintendents it is prescribed,—“After the Gospel and the sermon are ended, the *elected* person shall be presented unto the superintendent,” &c.: and again,—“Then the superintendent and elders present shall lay their hands on the head of the *elected* person, kneeling before them,” &c.: words which show that the superintendent should be presented for consecration not by Mr. Wesley’s personal appointment, but by their own choice. On this ground, though some years after Mr. Whatcoat was constitutionally elected to the episcopate, his ordination to that office was at the present time declined. These transactions (which, I may observe, were very unpalatable to Dr. Coke) did not imply any personal disrespect to Mr. Wesley, for whom, as expressed in an Address to him from the Conference, they still entertained an unchangeable regard; but took their rise from what was considered a needful care for their own liberty of action.

In the new edition of the Book of Discipline published this year, the title of “superintendent” was altered to that of “bishop.” The American preachers defend this resolution on the principle that the two names have the same meaning:

“superintendent” being the Latinized rendering of the Greek *episkopos*, or “bishop;” and that, though Mr. Wesley may have scrupled to adopt the latter name, he could not have been opposed to the thing signified by it, inasmuch as he had ordained Dr. Coke to the office itself, with orders to invest Mr. Asbury also with it, and with power to ordain others, and exercise functions which in Episcopal churches appertain not to a simple presbyter.

In accordance with this measure, there is a manifesto in the American Minutes for 1787, which declares, “We have constituted ourselves an Episcopal Church, under the direction of bishops, elders, deacons, and preachers; according to the form of ordination annexed to our Prayer-Book, and the regulations laid down in the Form of Discipline.”

At this Baltimore Conference Dr. Coke says he felt much of the Divine power in his ministrations, as also at the ordination of two elders and eleven deacons. At the close of the session he spent some time with Mr. Asbury in visiting the college, then nearly completed, and the Societies in New-York and Philadelphia. On the 27th of May he preached a farewell sermon; and, embarking on board a merchant-ship for Dublin, he accomplished the voyage in twenty-nine days.

CHAPTER X.

SECOND INTERVAL IN ENGLAND.

IN the Irish capital Dr. Coke had the happiness of once more meeting Mr. Wesley, who, since they last saw each other, had filled up another year of his long life in apostolic travels in England and Holland. He now presided for the last time in the annual assembly of the Irish preachers, to whom Dr. Coke recounted the things which had befallen him in the West Indies and America, in a recital which produced a common conviction that the time was fully come for a united effort for the establishment of missions in the isles which were so manifestly waiting for the word of God. The English Conference being about to be held at Manchester, the Doctor, with eleven of the Irish brethren, accompanied Mr. Wesley thither. The little voyage was not unattended with danger to their lives, from the vessel striking on a rock,* from which she with great difficulty escaped after beating against it with repeated strokes. In the report which the Doctor made of his foreign charge, he estimated the members on the new missions to be 2,950 in number, and those in the United States at 25,000; being an increase of more than 700 on the missions, and of 5,000 in America,—the first-fruits of harvests of larger magnitude, as time hath showed, and will yet show. Among the acts of this consistory at Manchester was one which is too germane to the episcopal relation of Dr. Coke to American Methodism not to be referred to here; that, I mean, in which Wesley gave a significant intimation of his perception of the future needs of the English Societies by the ordination

* "The middle Mouse."

of Thomas Rankin and Henry Moore to the office of presbyters, and of Alexander Mather to that of "superintendent." In that act of ordination he was assisted by two other clergymen, the Rev. Messrs. Creighton and Dickinson. Though urged to this anomalous transaction—as churchmen will think it—by the pressure of necessity, he still seems to have thought that it might consist with an unbroken communion with the mother-Church, as, in his charge to the ordained men, he solemnly enjoined "that, according to his own example, they should remain united to the Established Church, so far as the blessed work in which they were engaged would permit." On comparing Wesley's words with his deeds in this matter, it becomes sufficiently evident that the second wish of his heart was that Methodism might endure as an evangelic power in the Established Church: the first was, whether the Church should cherish or continue to reject it, that Methodism might endure.

He knew that what he did in these great interests must be done without further delay. His brother Charles was on the brink of death, and expired not long after, breathing still, in poetic numbers, the prayer of his passing soul for a smile from Christ; and he himself felt the sure presentiment that the time for his own departure was at hand.

From Manchester Dr. Coke went with Mr. Wesley to visit the small but hopeful Societies in the Channel Islands. The vessel in which they sailed from Southampton on the 11th of August was driven into Yarmouth, in the Isle of Wight, by a furious gale, which delayed them at that port and at Swanage for three days, and which, before they could make Guernsey, bore them among the multitude of rocks which engirdle the Isle of Alderney. Here, in great danger, they cried to God in prayer, and found, as before they had found when breaking on the rock in the Irish Channel, that He was nigh to hearken and to save. Landing on the island, Mr. Wesley preached in the evening on the shore, and was heard by the listening islanders in grateful silence. From the governor and inhabit-

ants in general they met with kind hospitality, and on the following day passed over to Guernsey. Both there and in Jersey they found Methodism taking firm hold among the people. Brackenbury and Adam Clarke were not labouring in vain. A multitude had already felt the genial glow of the Gospel in their souls, and hailed the ministrations of their venerable visitant as those of a father in Christ. To this day the traditions of those visits are told at the firesides of Methodist families of the third and fourth generations.

They returned to England, accompanied by Mr. Clarke, in a vessel bound for Penzance; and, beginning at that extremity of the country, Dr. Coke entered upon a year of service spread over many parts of the kingdom, in preaching the Gospel, collecting for the missions, and, as Mr. Wesley's representative and assistant, transacting a variety of business relating to the affairs of the Methodist Circuits. In these matters he sometimes was carried rather too far by a zeal which, in the estimate of cooler men, was not sufficiently tempered with prudence.* His natural impetuosity led him, it may be, to sudden decisions which subsequent reflection induced him to retract. These instances generated in the minds of some of the preachers a feeling toward the Doctor not so generous as might have been wished. And if in America, where his episcopal authority was legitimately recognised, it was felt that a certain vigilance over his movements was not deemed altogether unnecessary, in England, where such a prelate jurisdiction had no warrant, there was a still stronger disposition to keep him, so to speak, in check: a feeling augmented, no doubt, by the idea that in the vicar of Mr. Wesley there was an aspirant to the dignity of the Connexional patriarchate, after the true and ever-revered Founder himself should be translated to a throne in heaven. Whether Dr. Coke entertained that ambition I neither affirm nor deny; but it is sufficiently plain that the preachers, some of whom had been in the Methodist

* Note 14.

ministry before he was born, were, at that period of his life, by no means disposed to gratify it. On the other hand, in his own acknowledged sphere, as a diligent preacher of the word of God, and a zealous promoter of the Gospel in foreign lands, they all valued and revered him with an inexpressible admiration and love. It was in these departments that, wherever he came, he was certain of their hearty co-operation. He had now begun that systematic course of application for pecuniary help to the cause of missions, in the fulfilment of which he stands unrivalled among the agents of Christianity. Many preachers feel a reluctance to levy contributions of any kind, and hardly ever make a collection from the pulpit without a degree of reluctance, right or wrong: Dr. Coke not only made continual appeals to his congregations for money, but, subduing his natural dislike to a nearer approach to the practice of mendicity, he became, literally, a beggar from door to door. In these extensive intercourses with the people of England, in polished converse with the rich, and kindly communion with the poor, he acquired an insight into the realities of life attained but by few ecclesiastics; and he himself became better known among all religious classes than any minister, with the exception of such men as Whitefield and Wesley. His disinterested and benevolent efforts for the missionary work, stamped with the seal of his own labours and pecuniary sacrifices, commended him to all good men, and restrained the irreverence of the wicked. With these great charities he filled the circle of the year; and by the fruits of his begging expeditions had obtained a fund which enabled Mr. Wesley to appoint preachers to Newfoundland, and some additional missionaries for the West Indies. At the ensuing Conference, in London, an increase of twelve hundred members on the foreign stations evinced that the few men already in the field were gathering in precious sheaves for the eternal harvest; and Dr. Coke now prepared to accompany three new labourers to the islands of the west.*

* Messrs. Lumb, Pearce, and Gamble.

CHAPTER XI.

THIRD VOYAGE OUT.

THE missionaries made their transit across the Atlantic in the "Hankey," a vessel bound for Barbadoes, and under circumstances so propitious, as to serenity of weather and favouring breezes, that Dr. Coke says a voyage could hardly be more pleasant. In their social life on board, too, they felt themselves at ease; the captain being himself a religious man, and the sailors in general well disposed toward the words and ways of the Gospel. "Captain Sundius being a man who sincerely fears God, we had full liberty to sing and pray as often as we pleased; and he never neglected to join us. In all my voyages till this, I do not recollect that we were serviceable to any sailor except one; but the first time I preached in the 'Hankey,' on those words of our Lord, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,' the whole crew seemed deeply affected; and the subsequent labours of my brethren and self deepened the impression they had received. They were eager to read any books we gave them. Instead of the loose songs they sung among themselves at the beginning of the voyage, they delighted to meet to read our books. When we parted, the tears trickled down their cheeks; they showed the greatest eagerness to squeeze us by the hand; and, when our boat dropped astern, they gave us three as hearty cheers as I believe were ever given by a company of sailors."

On landing at Bridge-Town, they found a vessel about to sail for St. Vincent's; and Messrs. Lumb and Gamble took their departure that evening by it for that island. In Barbadoes, Dr. Coke, not knowing a soul, was obliged to repair,

with Mr. Pearce, the remaining missionary, to an inn. Scarcely, however, had they rested, before a train of circumstances began to unfold what cannot but be considered a manifestation of Providence for the success of the work on which they had come. First, Mr. Pearce, recollecting that a regiment of which he had some knowledge in Ireland was at that time stationed in Barbadoes, went to make inquiries at the barracks for some pious soldiers with whom he had been acquainted. He returned with one of them to the Doctor, and was followed shortly after by another, a sergeant, who, on recognising Mr. Pearce, his old minister, seized him in his arms in a transport of grateful joy. From these worthy men they learned, that, having been constrained to bear a public testimony for religion, a merchant named Button had provided them a large room in a warehouse for their devotional meetings. Whereupon the Doctor resolved to wait on this gentleman; who, however, having been already informed by the soldiers of his arrival, anticipated him by an invitation to breakfast.

“To my great surprise I found that Mr. Button knew me well, having frequently heard me preach in Maryland. Four of his black servants had been baptized by me. His house, heart, and all, seemed to be at our service. We discharged our bill at the inn, and found an asylum indeed with this our benevolent friend. We paid our respects to the governor, who received us with great politeness. In the evening I preached at Mr. Button’s to about three hundred persons; about twice as many being obliged to go away, for want of room. In the morning I rode into the country to visit a gentleman, Henry Trotman, Esq., for whom my kind friend, Mr. Dornford, of London, had procured me a letter of recommendation, to open a way for Mr. Pearce. But, providentially, there were two gentlemen of the same name, and I was led to the house of him for whom my letter was not intended. He received me with the utmost courtesy; and after I had breakfasted and dined with him, and laid before him our plan of operations, he

told me his house should be always open to Mr. Pearce, and his slaves be at his command at all proper hours. He has about two hundred."

On the Sunday morning they breakfasted, by invitation, with the clergyman. The Doctor preached in the evening. One of the magistrates, Mr. Errington, made them a visit, and supped with them. He had kindly feelings towards Methodism, having heard both the Wesleys preach in the north of England; expressed the greatest approbation of their designs, and promised on all occasions to give the missionaries any service in his power. On Monday morning Dr. Coke saw the Mr. Trotman whom he had missed on the Saturday. This gentleman, who was master of two hundred and fifty Negroes, told him he would himself call on Mr. Pearce, and should be happy to have his slaves instructed by him.

Having thus succeeded in inaugurating the work in Barbadoes, Coke left for St. Vincent's, and, in a few hours after landing, proceeded to carry into effect a desire he had entertained to explore a region of the island still in the possession of the aboriginal Caribs; and that, with a view of ascertaining the feasibility of a mission among them. The party consisted of Messrs. Baxter, Gamble, Clarke, and himself. "The roads," says he, "or rather narrow paths over the mountains, are the worst and most tremendous I ever rode. Some time ago Mr. Baxter nearly lost his life in crossing them. His horse fell down a precipice thirty feet perpendicular. The hind-legs of the animal were just over the precipice before he was alarmed, when he immediately threw himself off. In one place we could not even lead our horses, till a company of Caribs who were passing by lent us their cutlasses, with which we at last cut open a way. When we had descended the great mountain, we came into one of the most beautiful plains I ever saw, seven miles long and three broad; as beautiful as uncultivated nature can make it. It forms a bow, the string of which is washed by the ocean, and the bow itself surrounded by lofty mountains. Here the Caribs chiefly dwell.....They

are a handsomer people than the Negroes, but have a warlike appearance. The very women carry cutlasses, or naked knives, at their sides." The language of these people, harsh and dissonant, contains but comparatively few words. They spoke with an impetuosity which gave them the look of being in a passion. Some measures had been already taken by Mr. Baxter for the establishment of schools among them. In the house of the chief the travellers were entertained with a large dish of eggs, cassava-bread, and a bowl of punch. The chief, however, showed some uneasiness lest Dr. Coke should be an agent of the government; to allay which, Mr. Baxter "several times informed him that I received no pay from the king. Mr. Baxter seemed already to have won their affection; and, having made good progress in their language, I could not help entreating him to spend two years among them, and give them a full trial. Great as the cross was to that good man, who expected to return to his beloved Antigua, he immediately consented."*

I shall not be diffuse in detailing Dr. Coke's official operations in these islands. They are recorded in the annals of the Wesleyan missions, and their results become more and more apparent with the years of time. He appointed Messrs. Gamble and Clarke to labour in Barbadoes, with every promise of success, and proceeded with Mr. Lumb to Dominica. At Roseau a place had been already prepared for religious services, and a Society of twenty-five souls regularly organized under the care of Mr. M'Cornick. In Antigua Mr. Warrenner's labours had been much blessed, a thousand members having been gathered into the fold. So, too, at St. Christopher's, where he had left Mr. Hammet, he found seven hundred members, the fruit of his year's toil. While he was on this island, an earthquake, which seemed to move the mountains, and threaten the dissolution of all things, filled every heart

* For more about the Caribs, see Dr. Coke's History of the West Indies; and a short account of them published by him from materials furnished by a physician, Dr. Davidson, who resided on the borders of their country.

with terror. On landing at St. Eustatius, the Doctor found that the spirit of persecution had been vigorously at work. Fines, imprisonment, flogging, and transportation had been resolved on by the council as the penalty, not for preaching only, but even for the offence of praying to God in the presence of others. "Yet we ventured to baptize about one hundred and forty of our Society. And even under this cross, and hot persecution, our members amount to two hundred and fifty-eight.

"On Thursday, the 1st of January, we hired a sloop to carry us back to St. Christopher's. But, behold, as soon as we began to sail, we found that all the sailors were drunk, the captain excepted. In a little time they drove the sloop against a large ship, and damaged the boom and yards of the mainmast. Soon afterwards, when we came to the end of the island, instead of crossing the channel to St. Kitt's, the sloop was carrying us to sea in its shattered condition. Nor was there any one to turn her about, till with great difficulty the missionaries, unacquainted with such work, brought her round; and after running against another ship, by which the rudder was broke and the stern much damaged, we landed again on St. Eustatius.

"This series of misfortunes, which obliged us to return, appeared a loud call of Providence to me to bear a public testimony for Jesus Christ; and lest any of our friends should suffer whipping, confiscation, or banishment, by admitting me to preach in their houses, I hired a large room for a month, and the next day preached to a quiet and attentive congregation, and published myself for the Lord's day following. All was peace till late in the evening, when the governor sent for Mr. Lindsay, at whose house I was, and threatened him with terrible punishments.

"In the morning, while we were at breakfast, the marshal of the court entered with great form, and delivered us a message from the governor and fiscal, requiring us to promise that we would not publicly nor privately, by day or by night,

preach either to whites or blacks during our stay on that island, under the penalty of prosecution,—‘arbitrary punishment,’ (that was the very expression,)—and banishment from the island. We withdrew to consult; and after considering that we were favoured by Providence with an open door in other islands for as many missionaries as we could spare, and that God was carrying on His work even in this island by the means of secret class-meetings, and that Divine Providence may in future redress these grievances by a change of the governor, or by the interference of the superior powers in Holland, we gave for an answer, that we would obey the government. And, having nothing more at present to do in this place of tyranny, we returned to St. Kitt’s, blessing God for a British constitution and a British government.”

At Nevis, where they lay two nights on the floor, they met with a class of twenty-one catechumens, and left the work on the island to Mr. Owen. Dr. Coke was much delighted with the island of St. Saba; landing upon which, he was obliged to walk up a rock, a mile in length, and in several places nearly perpendicular. The isle itself is a steep rock, with a fertile plateau. Elevated between the sky and sea, the inhabitants of this table-land breathe the purest air, and cultivate a soil which yields them the choicest vegetables for their board, and cotton for their clothing. Though a Dutch settlement, the governor and council requested that Mr. Brazier, who had preached three times in their great church, should remain among them. The Doctor explained the Methodist economy, with which they signified their willingness to comply, to furnish the minister with a parsonage, and to allow him a sufficient maintenance. Mr. Brazier was accordingly appointed.

At Tortola, also, there was an open door. Between that island and Santa Cruz, where the governor-general promised them his protection, Mr. Hammet was directed to divide his attentions.

Thus far missionary agencies had been set in operation in

ten of the islands, which unitedly contained about two hundred and sixty thousand inhabitants, near four-fifths of whom were sunk in heathen darkness. The Doctor, in concluding this maritime tour, visited Jamaica. The people heard him in general with attention and pleasure, though in one or two instances he was molested with the bad behaviour of some drunken rioters. In no place, he writes, did he ever receive greater civilities: "four or five families of property having opened to me their houses, and, very evidently, their hearts also; and assured me that any missionaries we may send shall be welcome to everything their houses afford." From Port-Royal he embarked for America, landing at Charleston on the 24th of February.

Mr. Asbury had been there waiting for him, but had been obliged to leave, some hours before, for the Conference in Georgia. Dr. Coke set out the next morning, and, "riding in two days as much as *he* had in three, overtook him. The elder stationed in Charleston accompanied me. The first day we rode forty-seven miles; for about two miles of which our horses were up to their bellies in water, with two great invisible ditches on our right hand and left. One of the grandest objects to be seen in this country is the fires in the woods in the spring. The people set fire to the grass and little shrubs, to burn up the dry leaves which cover the ground, that the grass which grows up afterwards may be accessible to the cattle. Late one evening I saw a most astonishing illumination, while travelling through the woods. I seemed surrounded with fires. Sometimes the flame catches the oozing turpentine of the pine-trees, and blazes to the very top. I have seen old rotten pine-trees with their trunks and branches full of fire.

"The weather was as cold as it had been, according to the people, in any part of the winter; and was felt by me, just come from the torrid zone, with peculiar severity. Though I clothed myself almost from top to toe with flannel, I could but just bear the cold. We had congregations all the way

after I met Mr. Asbury, but our journeys in the back parts of Carolina and Georgia were very trying. Sometimes we lost our way; in one instance, twenty-one miles. In general nothing but bacon and eggs, with Indian corn. Mr. Asbury had brought with him some tea and sugar. In several places we had to lie on the floor; which indeed I regarded not, though my bones were a little sore in the mornings.

"The great revival, the great rapidity of the work, the peculiar consolations of God's Spirit, and the retirement I met with in these vast forests, far overbalanced every trial. Many other circumstances also amply compensated for the disagreeable parts of my journey. Sometimes a most noble vista of a mile in length would open between the lofty pines. Sometimes the tender fawns and hinds would suddenly appear, and on seeing or hearing us would glance through the woods and vanish away. Frequently, indeed, we were obliged to lodge in houses built with round logs, and open to every blast. Often we rode sixteen or eighteen miles without seeing a house or a human creature, and often were obliged to ford deep and dangerous rivers and creeks. Many times we ate nothing from seven in the morning till six in the evening, though sometimes we took our repast on stumps of trees near some spring of water." *

The Georgia preachers had gathered, for their Conference, at a place called Grant's. Asbury in referring to this meeting says that "it was a time of peace and love," and that Dr. Coke preached the ordination-sermon. Coke records that among the things resolved on was the erection of a college in Georgia, for which the principal friends in the state had already engaged to purchase two thousand acres of land.

Retracing their way to Charleston, they held there the Conference for South Carolina. Great crowds pressed to hear

* Asbury in his journal says, while on this journey: "Riding late has much disordered me, having taken cold, with fever and pains in the head." In another place: "We rode forty miles, hungry and weary."

the word. "We were bitterly attacked in the public papers; but our mild answer did us more service than the illiberal attempts of our persecutors did us hurt." On the 12th of April they met the Conference for North Carolina, at a building "on the borders of a fine river called the Yadkin. Nineteen preachers met us, some of whom came from the other side of the Alleghany mountains. From Kentucky also came a request for a college. In each of these Conferences the preachers reported an increase of many hundreds of members."

In travelling towards Virginia new scenes of natural beauty awoke the Doctor's admiration. The country abounded with peach-orchards, all in full bloom, in blue, purple, and violet. Along the vale flowed the river Yadkin, reflecting the sun from its broad, placid stream; the background of the vast landscape being formed by lofty mountains. "The two days following we rode on the ridges of hills with a large valley on each side, and mountains rising above mountains for twenty—and sometimes, I suppose, forty—miles on each hand." In the town of Petersburg they held their Virginia Conference. Thirteen new preachers were received on trial. Another Conference, at Leesburg. The increase for Virginia, two thousand.

Proceeding through Alexandria and Annapolis towards Baltimore, he preached a sermon at the former place, which, he praises God, "gave huge offence to the unregenerate rich;" and at Annapolis was taken by surprise by one of those religious movements which have not been uncommon in America. "After my last prayer the congregation began to pray and praise aloud in a most astonishing manner. At first I felt some reluctance to enter into the business; but soon the tears began to flow, and I have seldom found a more comforting or strengthening time. What shall we say? Souls are awakened and converted, by multitudes; and the work is surely genuine, if there be a genuine work of God upon the earth. Whether there be wildfire in it or not, I do

most ardently wish that there was such a work at this time in England."

At some of the religious services of the Conference in Baltimore the same movement took place. "After I had preached on Wednesday evening, and Mr. Asbury exhorted, the congregation began to pray and praise aloud, and continued so to do till two o'clock in the morning. Out of a congregation of two thousand people two or three hundred were engaged at the same time in praising God, praying for the conversion of sinners, or exhorting those around; and hundreds more were engaged in prayer either for their own conversion or sanctification. The noise soon brought a multitude, for whom there was no room in the church. One of our elders was the means of the conversion of seven poor penitents within his little circle.... And it must be allowed that gracious and wonderful has been the change, our enemies being judges, that has been wrought on multitudes at these seasons."

At the other Maryland Conference, held in Charleston, a like scene was unfolded. "They began, and continued till eleven at night. A lawyer who came there out of curiosity, and who is eminent for good sense and great ability in his profession, was constrained in the midst of this work to acknowledge to some who were near him that he believed it proceeded from the interference of a Divine power."

A visitation to Cokesbury College, and two other Conferences at Philadelphia and Trenton, completed the business of the Doctor's present tour, excepting a transaction which attracted a good deal of attention in England, and gave him some measure of trouble on his return.

The federal constitution at first organized on the close of the war in the United States being found wanting in those principles which are necessary to the practical details of government, some important modifications had been recently adopted, which gave a new cast of character to the republican system, at the head of which, by the universal choice of his countrymen, General Washington had been appointed the

first president. At the time of the assembly of the Congress in New-York, in which these changes were confirmed, the ministers of the Methodist Episcopal Church were holding their annual Conference in the same city. Considering it their duty to give some public token of their allegiance to the new constitution, they resolved to do it by a congratulatory address to the president, the delivery of which was confided to the two bishops. An address was accordingly prepared and adopted by the Conference; and two of the ministers, the Rev. Messrs. Morrell and Dickins, were delegated to wait on the president with a copy of it, and to request him to appoint a time to receive it in form from one of the bishops. Mr. Morrell says, in a memorandum of the transaction, that in the Conference it was considered that, although Dr. Coke was the senior bishop, yet, as he was not an American citizen, there would be an impropriety in his presenting and reading the address; and the duty of course devolved on Bishop Asbury. "Mr. Dickins and myself," adds he, "waited on the general; and, as I had some personal acquaintance with him, I was desired to present him with the copy, and request his reception of the original at the hands of the bishop. The president appointed the fourth succeeding day, at twelve o'clock. They went at the appointed hour, accompanied by brother Dickins and Thomas Morrell. Mr. Asbury with great self-possession read the address in an impressive manner. The president read his reply with animation. They interchanged their respective addresses, and after sitting a few minutes we departed. In a few days the other denominations successively followed our example."

That we may form a correct judgment on this affair, I will transcribe the documents themselves.

ADDRESS OF THE BISHOPS OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL
CHURCH.

"To the President of the United States:—

"SIR,—We, the bishops of the Methodist Episcopal

Church, humbly beg leave, in the name of our Society collectively in these United States, to express to you the warm feelings of our hearts, and our sincere congratulations on your appointment to the presidency of these States. We are conscious, from the signal proofs you have already given, that you are a friend of mankind, and, under this established idea, place as full confidence in your wisdom and integrity for the preservation of those civil and religious liberties which have been transmitted to us by the Providence of God, and the glorious Revolution, as we believe ought to be reposed in man.

“We have received the most grateful satisfaction from the humble and entire dependence on the great Governor of the universe which you have repeatedly expressed, acknowledging Him the source of every blessing, and particularly of the most excellent constitution of these States, which is at present the admiration of the world, and may in future become its great exemplar for imitation; and hence we enjoy a holy expectation that you will always prove a faithful and impartial patron of genuine vital religion, the grand end of our creation and present probationary existence. And we promise you our fervent prayers at the throne of grace, that God Almighty may endue you with all the graces and gifts of His Holy Spirit, that He may enable you to fill your important station to His glory, the good of His church, the happiness and prosperity of the United States, and the welfare of mankind.

“Signed in behalf of the Methodist Episcopal Church,

“THOMAS COKE,

“FRANCIS ASBURY.

“*New-York, May 29th, 1789.*”

REPLY OF THE PRESIDENT.

“To the Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States.

“GENTLEMEN,—I return you individually, and through you to your Society collectively in the United States, my thanks

for the demonstration of affection and the expressions of joy offered in their behalf on my late appointment. It shall be my endeavour to manifest the purity of my inclinations for promoting the happiness of mankind, as well as the sincerity of my desires to contribute whatever may be in my power toward the civil and religious liberties of the American people. In pursuing this line of conduct, I hope, by the assistance of Divine Providence, not altogether to disappoint the confidence which you have been pleased to repose in me.

“It always affords me satisfaction when I find a concurrence of sentiment and practice between all conscientious men, in acknowledgments of homage to the great Governor of the universe, and in professions of support to a just civil government. After mentioning that I trust the people of every denomination who demean themselves as good citizens will have occasion to be convinced that I shall always strive to prove a faithful and impartial patron of genuine vital religion, I must assure you, in particular, that I take in the kindest part the promise you make of presenting your prayers at the throne of grace for me; and that I likewise implore the Divine benediction on yourselves and your religious community.

“GEORGE WASHINGTON.”

The address to the president, as from American citizens, was a fit and proper thing; but we must express our regret that Dr. Coke, however great his veneration for the excellent man who first wore, and so well, the presidential dignity, should have taken any part in it. As a composition, the wording and style of the address are far from good; and the political sentiments, well as they become the lips of a republican, will never find a response from the heart or tongue of an Englishman.

With regard to Mr. Asbury, the case was very different. In doing what he did, he acted in perfect keeping with his standing and character as a voluntary subject of the American

constitution. I may add, that his admiration of General Washington was of the most heartfelt sincerity. When, ten years afterward, that great man was called from the service of his country by death, the bishop, in an eloquent elogy, describes him as "the calm intrepid chief, the disinterested friend, first father and temporal saviour of his country; a matchless man, who at all times acknowledged the Providence of God, and never was ashamed of his Redeemer. He died, not fearing death; ordering in his will the manumission of his slaves; in all points a true son of liberty."

On his homeward way Coke was favoured with a quiet and pleasant voyage in the ship "Union," bound for Liverpool. "My books," says he, "my papers, and, above all, fellowship with God, have made the whole way agreeable. Captain Cook's Voyages to the Pacific Ocean, and Carver's Travels among the Indians in North America, have afforded me great entertainment. But what an awful reflection it is, that the consequence of our voyages of discovery has been the loss of a number of innocent lives!—an injury, nevertheless, trifling when compared with the irretrievable harm entailed upon the natives by corrupting their morals.....What a pity it is that the pure intentions of one of the best of sovereigns, the great patron of the arts and sciences, as well as all the expense of the voyages, should be thus unaccompanied with any beneficial effect! But if the salvation of many souls was to be the glorious consequence, his majesty, and every person who loves the Redeemer, would have a compensation indeed. And such a beneficial intercourse would be opened between them and us, if missions for the establishment of the Gospel were set on foot, and through the blessing of God succeeded, as would make any benevolent scheme of a civil or political kind not only feasible, but easy."

In what a blessed degree these anticipations have been brought into fulfilment, such records as Ellis's "Polynesian Researches" and Young's "Southern World" remind us, with claims for thanksgiving, and encouragements to the full

assurance of hope. How great would have been the satisfaction of the man of God who thus "prophesied in part," could he have contemplated the results which are every year following the enterprises of the Church, the London, and the Wesleyan Missionary Societies in the Australian hemisphere! The people who sat in darkness have seen the light.

Approaching the coast of Ireland, the Doctor describes a grand aerial panorama, which, as an ardent lover of the beautiful whether in the natural or the moral world, gave him, as he says, "a delicious entertainment." It was portrayed on a mass of calm clouds rising from the northern horizon. "No pencil can express their beauty. Being not far distant from Ireland, I apprehended for a moment that I saw a land-prospect gilded with the beams of the setting sun,.....sloping hills, perpendicular rocks, turrets seated on eminences, and here and there an opening glade or lawn, sometimes even a town or village. They who are not acquainted with the seas have no conception of the pleasure it gave, especially as my mind was enabled to ascend to the celestial Painter whose glorious handiwork was so visibly before me. 'But they were mere clouds,' says the phlegmatic scorner. And what is the work of a Raphael but canvas and paint? All is cloud and vapour, without the enjoyment of God.

"On the 8th, in the morning, the captain informed me we had been in imminent danger the night before, from a sudden and violent squall on the Devonshire coast; the ship having run in the night, through a mistake of the captain, too far to the south, instead of sailing along the Irish coast. Great as it seems were the noise and alarm, I was fast asleep the whole time: but the Keeper of Israel neither slumbered nor slept.

"On the 9th we passed by the awful rock in the Irish Channel, where, two years ago, Mr. Wesley and myself, with about ten of the preachers, were nearly lost; our ship striking against the rock about forty times in an hour and five minutes, and our deliverance appearing to have been a very

extraordinary answer to prayer. O that the solemn providences of God which have brought me many a time to the very brink of a watery grave, and then stept in with saving powers, may perfectly unfetter my soul from earth, and bring it, through Divine grace, into the closest union with my God ! ”

CHAPTER XII.

THIRD INTERVAL IN ENGLAND.

THE part taken by Dr. Coke in the congratulatory address to the president of the American republic called forth no little criticism on each side of the water. The addresses had been published in the American newspapers, and were copied into our own; and in both countries the general sentiment was that of disapprobation. Some of the journals in the United States, in descanting on "the impropriety of a British subject" in signing an address of the kind, charged the Doctor with duplicity, inasmuch as, according to their one-sided view, he being an Englishman must needs be an enemy to the independence of America. In England, too, among his real friends, the anomaly that a subject of the British crown should "eulogize as a 'glorious revolution' a war which had beaten the armies of his king, and wrested a mighty empire from his rule," seemed utterly condemnable. It was no wonder, then, that the pleasure Dr. Coke felt in rejoining his fathers and brethren in their annual assembly at Bristol should be overclouded by a consciousness that he had incurred their serious disapproval.

When, then, in the routine of the Conference, under the question, "Whether there are any objections to any of our preachers?" the name of Thomas Coke was called, the matter was gone into in form. A copy of the address was laid before the preachers, and their judgment was unanimous, that as a subject of the English monarchy the Doctor had departed from propriety in signing the address; that its phraseology, in lauding the republican constitution of the United States, threw a sinister reflection on that of Great Britain, and, in

representing it as a model for the regimen of other nations, inculcated to all appearance his very loyalty to the throne. Moreover, as a Methodist, and a clergyman of so conspicuous a standing in the Connexion, he had permitted himself to do a thing which might bring upon the Methodist body itself the unmerited charge of disaffection to the crown, and justly excite the indignation of all true Englishmen.

Dr. Coke heard these painful adjudications with a deferential silence. He saw his error, and would not defend or extenuate it. He was dumb, and opened not his mouth. Silence made an appeal to the justice as well as mercy of his brethren, to take into consideration the difficulties attending on an anomalous position, and on duties with which they themselves had invested him, in sending him as an English subject to sustain the office and fulfil the duties of a chief pastor in a Church which owed allegiance to a foreign government.

Yet, whatever might have been said to extenuate the indiscretion into which he had been betrayed, it was apparent to himself, as well as others, that he had been indiscreet. The same delicacy which kept him from being present personally at the official reading of the address to Washington, should have deterred him from giving it the signature of his name; a reticence which would have been perfectly understood, and approved of too, by all intelligent and honourable men in the United States.

There is no need that we dwell upon this matter. The Conference itself at the time did not. They knew the man, and his communications; and they knew, too, that though from want of consideration he had brought upon himself this appearance of disrespect to the government of his native land, there beat in no bosom among them a truer English heart than his. And, having delivered themselves of what was felt to be a duty on the unpleasant occasion, the ministers were prepared, with an ingenuous and honest love for the work and the workman, to listen to his statements about the progress

of the cause which was, to him and them alike, of all others sacred, in the lands beyond the flood. They were now enabled to register on their Minutes seven missionary stations in the West Indies, and four in Nova-Scotia and Newfoundland. In the West Indies there were 4,500 members. For British America he reported 800, and for the United States 43,265. In America the Methodist ministry was rapidly increasing in numerical and moral power. The preachers in connexion with the English Conference in this, the last year of Wesley's life, were 313; and in the United States those of the Methodist Episcopal Church 198.

From the Conference Dr. Coke proceeded on his usual home-work of preaching from town to town, and begging for the means of sending forth the Gospel abroad. In the course of these itinerations he came to Brecon, his own native place, and in the old town-hall preached to a crowded congregation on his all-absorbing theme, from the text of the Psalm, that "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God." He once more wandered on the banks of the Usk and the Honddu, and paced the shady avenues of the woods where "deep in the gloom of trees" stood the old Benedictine priory,—living over again the vanished days. He stood in prayer at the graves of his parents, to whose loved memory he had dedicated in filial devotion a costly marble, which may be still seen in the chancel of the Priory church, with a simple but affectionate inscription:—

"In the chapel belonging to this church lie the remains of Mr. Bartholomew Coke, apothecary, and one of the common councillors of this borough, who departed this life on the 7th of May, in the year 1773, in the seventy-second year of his age. Also the remains of his two sons, Bartholomew and John, both of whom died young. And also the remains of Mrs. Anne Coke, relict of Mr. Bartholomew Coke, who departed this life the 17th of May, 1783, aged seventy years.

"Mr. Bartholomew Coke was a man of most amiable

temper, and was beloved by all who knew him. His great benevolence, generosity, and hospitality cannot be forgotten by those who have any remembrance of him. He filled the office of chief magistrate of this borough several times with universal approbation. His great medical knowledge was well known in this county.

"Mrs. Anne Coke, his wife, feared God from her youth. In her latter days, after the death of her husband, she resided in London, to enjoy as much as possible the company of her only son. While with him, she entered deeply into the things of God, and died in London in the assurance of faith in her blessed Redeemer; being enabled to resign her son himself, whom she loved above all the world, to the care and protection of his God.—This monument is erected by the son, as a tribute of filial duty towards two of the best of parents, whom he hopes soon to meet in the realms of bliss."

But, before this last-expressed hope should receive its consummation, he felt that present duty called him to quit once more these beloved spots, and gird up his loins for the labours that lay immediately before him, so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry he had received of the Lord. He would lay aside every weight, and run the race set before him, looking unto Jesus. So went he forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord blessing the word with signs following. His preaching had a distinctive character. The Gospel he brought to the ears and hearts, I may say, of myriads, not only kindled anxieties for the hearers' own salvation, but exerted an expansive power which moved them to seek the salvation of multitudes besides. In a word, the missionary enterprise began to stir the conscience of the church; and in the Methodist communion it took this year something like an organic form, by the appointment of a corporate body who should be charged with its administration,—the first Methodist "Missionary Committee." The men who composed it were Thomas Coke, Alexander Mather, Thomas Rankin, James Rogers, Henry Moore, Adam Clarke, John Baxter, William

Warrener, and Matthew Lumb. These servants of Christ, with Wesley, though just parting for eternity, at their head, were the "fathers and founders" of that beneficent institution whose agencies have already, in co-operation with kindred societies, effected such cheering meliorations among some of the worst and most hopeless tribes of the human race. But as yet it was the day of small things. Could the attention of the world have been directed to this confederation, its apparent insignificance would have created probably no feeling but contempt. Some years later, when its growing power did attract a passing notice, the world pronounced its opinion in the insolent sarcasms of one of its chaplains in the *Edinburgh Review*. But what shall we say? Had the world anything better to offer for the redress of the ever-rising evils of the age? The world at that time had its own "associations,"—revolutionary "committees," with Abaddon as their presiding elder; committees, too, in the cabinets of kings, whose "resolutions" were carried into effect by the sacrifice of hundreds of millions of money, and wholesale murders, which desolated Europe for a quarter of a century. As to the relative amount of good done by these opposite forms of agency,—the world's military missions, and the humble ministrics of peace promoted by the despised evangelists of Jesus Christ,—the "printed reports" of each party will enable posterity to decide. Our narrative is now touching on a time, the last decade of the eighteenth century, which forms so momentous an epoch in human history. Judgment and mercy were both at work. Outside of Christendom, Paganism and Mahometanism had spread their dark pall over ruined generations; and within it the villanous hypocrisies of Rome had demoralized the social life of Europe, and seared its conscience with atheism. Yet of this terrible night the noon had already passed, and the dawn had broke of a day that will bring salvation. A new apostolate of truth and grace—feeble, like the first, to human eyes—had been called into incipient activity. The days had come when "this Gospel

of the kingdom must be preached among all nations ;” and the forthgoing word was attended with the visible concurrence of a Power before which darkness changes into light, and life re-appears from the tomb.

“ ’Tis the breath

Of God. Awake, ye nations ! spring to life ;

Let the last work of His right hand appear,

Fresh with His image,—man, redeem’d and free.”

CHAPTER XIII.

FOURTH VOYAGE OUT.

OUR missionary bishop was once more breasting the Atlantic waves. After sixteen months' incessant occupation in his English itinerancy, he had embarked at Falmouth on the 16th of October, 1790, with two other preachers, Messrs. Lyons and Worrell, who had been ordained for the extension of the work in the West Indies. The Doctor was well content with these and his other companions on the watery way. "Sir John Orde, governor of Dominica, the captain, master, surgeon, and ourselves, were the company in the cabin. The captain was very kind and attentive to us, and we had abundance of everything we could desire to make the voyage comfortable. Each Friday we observed as a real fast; and every evening we had prayer with the sailors, but could not prevail to have prayer in the morning, the sailors excusing themselves by saying they had not time. On each Lord's day I read prayers on deck, and one of us preached. The boatswain, we have no doubt, was under conviction long before we arrived; and we have great reason to hope that two more were awakened." After a sail of five weeks they first saw the island of Barbadoes; and the pleasant Bridge-Town, with its surrounding land-scenery and beautiful harbour, gave the new missionaries a grateful prepossession in favour of the sphere of their future labours. In Bridge-Town the Doctor preached three times. A chapel large enough for seven hundred hearers had been built by the zealous activity of Mr. Pearce, who had done it, too, in the midst of much persecution; but the good cause proved all the stronger for the trying storm. Leaving Mr. Lyons at Barbadoes, Dr. Coke proceeded with Mr. Worrell

to St. Vincent's. At Kingstown, in that island, the Methodists had lately purchased the Roman Catholic chapel. With Mr. Baxter the Doctor made a visitation of the Societies on the windward side of the island. "The country is very hilly, and full of picturesque scenes. The steep mountains with their sharp peaks,—the cocoa-trees and plantains,—the grew-grew, whose trunk is smaller at the bottom than the top, and which is frequently covered, branches, leaves, and all, by a plant like the ivy,—the sugar-canes on the gentle declivities,—the coffee and cotton plantations,—the ocean evermore in view,—the white foam of the sea between the rocks and promontories, sometimes covering a great expanse of water,—and the burning sun gilding the strong perpetual verdure of the whole vegetable creation,—form such scenes as persons unacquainted with the torrid zone have hardly any conception of.

"We rode to the borders of the Carib-Land. Poor people! When Mrs. Baxter took her leave of some of them, she wept bitterly, and prayed that they might have another call, and accept, and not reject it, as they did the late one. As we returned, a Negro woman ran up to us out of a field to shake us by the hand. 'Do you love God?' said Mr. Worrell to her. 'Yes,' said she, 'I do; otherwise I would not have come to you. I have felt the Redeemer's life and death in my soul.' There is certainly a prospect of a great flame throughout the island. Even many of the Roman Catholics prefer our missionaries to their own priests, and have sent for Mr. Baxter to baptize their children."

On the 28th of November they landed at Grenada. Being Sunday, they went to the St. George's church; and after service the minister, the Rev. Mr. Dent, received them in the vestry with great kindness. He was the only clergyman in the islands who had shown any regard for the Methodists. He defended them in every company, till he himself fell into reproach; but General Matthews, the governor of Grenada, had expressed his respect for Mr. Dent by giving him the living of St. George's. They waited on his excellency, who honoured

them with an hour's conversation on the design of their visit, and hoped they would not fail to carry it into effect by sending missionaries to the island. With the governor they dined, in company with the president of the council, and the speaker of the House of Assembly ; who, as well as other gentlemen to whom they were afterwards introduced, gave them every encouragement. After preaching in George-Town, they went on a journey which took them over mountains on whose summits the temperature was so different from that in the lowlands, that they "could wear their great coats buttoned." Describing one spot, where a large lake stood surrounded by eminences covered with wood, the Doctor says : "If I were to turn hermit, I should fix on this place, where I would fix an observatory on one of the peaks, and spend my time in communion with God, and in the study of astronomy and botany." In calling at different houses, they found a general disposition to receive a missionary.

From Grenada, touching at St. Vincent's, they arrived at Antigua. "Here," he writes, "I found myself indeed at home, and spent four comfortable days. At the baptism of three adults we had a memorable time. One of them was so overcome that she fell into a swoon ; and all she said for some time, but with a countenance of rapture, was, 'Heaven, heaven ! Come ! come !' The work of God deepens in this island, and the Negroes give a more pointed and more scriptural account of their experience than they used to do."

On the 8th, at eleven at night, they sailed from Antigua, and, calling at Montserrat, the following evening reached St. Christopher's, whither the missionaries had been directed to repair to hold their little Conference. Three of them not having arrived, the Doctor made a short visit to St. Eustatius, to see whether a more favourable disposition prevailed there than when he was last in the West Indies. He obtained an introduction to the new governor, a Dutchman, lately come out, who received him "with very great rudeness indeed ;" and soon ascertained that there was no hope in that quarter. He

learned, however, that the disciples of the Lord were not now actively persecuted, but enjoyed a certain degree of liberty to meet unmolested; and, fearing to stir up the old flame of enmity by any public preaching, he crossed to Nevis, where, from Mr. Ward, the judge of the Admiralty, and other gentlemen, he experienced every kindness. With two of them, the Messrs. Nesbitt, he appears to have been greatly delighted. Mr. Richard Nesbitt he calls the most pious white man he had met in the West Indies; and of the other, his first cousin, Walter by name, Dr. Coke says,—“He had concentrated in him everything that can constitute the man of honour, and the gentleman.” Returning to St. Christopher’s, he spent the next three days in Conference with the missionaries, and then proceeded by way of St. Vincent’s (“spending my Christmas very comfortably, and profitably to myself, and, I trust, to others, in that romantic island”) to Jamaica. He landed at Montego-Bay on the 5th of January. Here the Doctor was among none but strangers. “I walked about the streets peeping and inquiring, but could hear of no place in which I could preach, and to preach out of doors is impracticable in this burning clime. Besides, the Negroes are not able to attend till the evening, when the heavy dews render it dangerous to preach abroad.....While dining the following day at an ordinary, I simply told the company the business on which I was come, and regretted to lose the opportunity of preaching to the inhabitants of the town for want of a place. One of them observed, that the large assembly-room, which was frequently used as a playhouse, and was formerly the church, would be very commodious. Immediately after dinner we waited on the proprietor, who generously gave me the use of the room, which has two small galleries, and will contain about five or six hundred people, and also lighted it at his own expense. The first evening I had most of the principal people of the town, who attended during the four evenings I preached there. They heard with great attention. A few rakes only clapped their hands, and cried out, *Encore! encore!* the first and second

evenings, after I had concluded ; but were from that time prevented by the interference of some of the gentlemen. On the Sunday morning we went to church ; but, a little rain falling, the congregation consisted only of half-a-dozen, or thereabouts, at the exact time of beginning ; on which the minister walked out. Had he condescended to wait ten minutes, we should have been about twenty. The Sunday before, also, there had been no service. In some of the parishes of this island there is no church, nor any Divine service performed, except the burial of the dead, and christenings and weddings in private houses, though the livings are very lucrative. But I will write no more on this subject, lest I should grow indignant."

We beg the reader to remark this extract. The Methodist missions were needed for the salvation of the perishing white people, as well as that of the Negroes. It was by this visit that a door was opened for the evangelists of Christ to come among them.

Overland, by a long and weary ride on horseback of a hundred and twenty miles, they proceeded to Kingston, which they reached in great exhaustion. Here they found Mr. Hammet ill from the combined effects of labour and persecution. His life itself had been more than once endangered. The large chapel erected on the parade, a structure of eighty feet in length, had been often threatened with demolition by the mob. But Providence had raised up a number of friends among the more respectable classes, who stood forward as the guardians of the property and the person of the missionary. An active controversy was going on in the public papers, some for and others against the new cause. All sorts of bad things were recorded against Mr. Hammet, while several letters written in an excellent style defended his character and name. Dr. Coke himself did not escape the missiles of calumny ; and, among other notable accusations alleged to his disadvantage, one was that he had been tried in England for horse-stealing, and had escaped to America to get out of the way !—"On the first evening of my arrival I ventured to open the chapel

again, and had a numerous audience. Some of them were very rude, but I passed them by unnoticed. My dear friend Mr. Hammet lay dangerously ill of a fever and ague, worn almost to a skeleton with opposition and fatigue. I had an interview with his physician, who assured me there was not the least hope of his recovery but by his removal to a colder climate; and I determined to take him with me to America. He has been employed in the most arduous undertakings in these islands. The two most flourishing Societies in the West Indies, Antigua excepted, were raised by his indefatigable labours; and there are but few in the world with whom I have been acquainted that possess the proper apostolic spirit in an equal degree with him.”*

Mr. Worrell was now appointed to remain in Kingston, and Mr. Brazier to a new undertaking at Spanish-Town, where they hired a place in the outskirts, in which, amid much tumult, the Doctor opened their commission. After various other arrangements he embarked with Mr. Hammet at Port-Royal, on board the brig “Success,” for Charleston, in America. The voyage was not without danger, both among that vast range of desolate rocks called, from the many fatal wrecks which have been suffered on them, “The Martyrs,” among which they passed in a dark night; and by drifting nigh upon some precipitous ledges on the coast of Cuba; and afterwards from a mighty gale that broke upon them in the Gulf of Florida, in which they lay at the mercy of the winds and waves for forty-eight hours; but, above all, by the captain losing his reckoning, and running the ship aground off the American coast. “The morning was very foggy, and the captain brought the brig into four fathoms’ water, in order, he said, to discover the land, and find out our situation. About nine she struck against a sand-bank, but was got off. In half an hour more she struck three times against another bank, but was

* Though Mr. Hammet’s subsequent career was less satisfactory, we will not withhold this just and generous tribute to the worth of the services in which he had heretofore been engaged.

again cleared off. About ten she struck again, and fastened. From this time till noon she continued striking with such force that we could hardly stand, and great pieces were broke off from the false keel, and seen awfully floating on the water. Now the land was clearly in view, about three miles from our brig; and we heard with joy the command given that the boats should be hoisted out. The small boat was first ready; but when the long-boat was let down, it was so very leaky that they were obliged to draw it up again, to calk it.....However, to our great satisfaction, the captain ordered that four of the men should go on shore in the small boat to look for assistance; and my friend and myself gladly improved the opportunity. As soon as we came to shore, Mr. William Eding, who was taking a ride on the beach, stood ready to receive us, as if sent there by Providence, and brought us to his mother's house, where we dined."

The Doctor found he had landed on Edisto Island, about fifty miles from Charleston. He learned that, some five days before, a brig had been wrecked on the same bank. Furnished with horses by Mr. Eding, they crossed to an opposite point of the island, from which they went over, in a large half-covered boat, to Charleston.

Having been delayed a fortnight beyond the appointed time, Dr. Coke had not the pleasure of meeting the Conference which had assembled in the city, till the last day of session, which he spent with the brethren "in many solemn and useful conversations." He secured, too, an able missionary for the people of Edisto Island, among whom he had lately found such timely hospitality.

At this time the action of the Methodist Episcopal Church had already extended over an area of two thousand miles. Its ministry had been organized into seven Annual Conferences, held in close succession, and wound up by a General Conference, composed of representatives delegated from the seven. Dr. Coke presided in each of these when in America, as Bishop Asbury did when his colleague was in England or

elsewhere. It was now Bishop Coke's province to take this vast visitation. The first after the Charleston or South-Carolina Conference was that for Georgia, for which he left on the 8th of March. They had not ridden many miles before the vicissitudes of the rough travel of those days began. "We lost our way, by consenting to follow one of our preachers who undertook to guide us through the woods a shorter way. Nine o'clock came, and we knew not where we were, except that we were in the middle of large morasses. About ten the moon would set; and we agreed to make our abode for the night on some dry spot, if we could not before that time find out a shelter. But, under the blessing and guidance of Providence, we came again unexpectedly into the great road, and found ourselves near the house of our friend Mr. Giveham, the light of which delighted our eyes. When we entered, we found that our kind friend had provided for us a roasted turkey, which was just taken off the spit. A congregation had waited for me a long time, and had broke up in despair of our arriving. This is the fourth congregation I have disappointed, but not intentionally, in my life. It grieves me much when hurt is done, though not intentionally; for I am loth to deduct out of the very little good I have done in my life. But I want more faith. Lord, help my unbelief."

These woodland wanderings had a great charm for the Doctor. "There is something exceedingly pleasing," says he, "in preaching daily to large congregations in immense forests. O, what pains the people take to hear the Gospel!—but it is worthy of all pains." He says that the trees, now coming out in their vernal beauty, assisted him, under the supreme Source of happiness, "to make his heart gay;" and, while he thus rose through nature up to nature's God, he saw and adored in Him a Redeemer, as well as a Creator. "It is one of my most delicate enjoyments to engulf myself, if I may so express it, in the woods. I seem then to be detached from everything but the quiet creation and my God." In those sweet hours of seclusion, he intimates, too, that his soul was

often dissolved in tenderness, and lost in wonder at the heights and depths of redeeming love; and that he could enter into the feeling expressed by the beautiful words of the poet:—

“I’d carve Thy passion on the bark,
And every wounded tree
Shall drop, and bear some mystic mark
That Jesus died for me.

“The swains shall wonder as they read,
Inscribed on all the grove,
That Heaven itself came down and bled
To win a mortal’s love!”

Meanwhile Mr. Asbury was proceeding to the same Conference, by a different route. Referring to his journal of those days, I find the following:—“Wed., 23d. Long looked-for Dr. Coke came. He had been shipwrecked off Edisto.—Sun., 27th. The Doctor preached to a very large audience. The poor sinners appeared to be a little tamed. I trust there has been good done in Charleston this Conference. I want to be gone into the country to enjoy solitude and prayer. Have been reading three hundred pages of Taylor’s sermons.—Tuesday. Made my last effort for this time, and the people were attentive. I let out freely against the races. I am somewhat disturbed at the uneasiness of our people, who claim a right to choose their own preachers; a thing quite new among Methodists. None but Mr. H. will do for them. We shall see how it will end.—Wed., 2d. I left the city, something grieved.—Fri., 4th. Had a very well-dressed, serious, and attentive congregation at the district court-house. Not much liberty. Our horses are much hurt, having travelled a hundred miles in two days.—Sat., 5th. Read critically Mrs. Rowe’s ‘Devout Exercises.’ Wrote nearly twenty pages to Dr. Coke on the concerns of the Church.—Georgia, Monday, 7th. Preached at Hudson’s Ferry with some freedom; but the people appeared wild and stupid. Came in a heavy storm to brother H.’s. This day I passed Savanna swamp, parts of which are not unlike the Santee and Kentucky lands.—8th.

We had near four hundred people at R.'s, and I trust the Lord in some good degree breathed upon the souls present. We then rode sixteen miles, and had a comfortable evening exercise.—Wed., 9th. Preached in an old church. Much fatigued and unwell. Came to Waynesborough. Lodged with Mr. Henry, a Jew. We read Hebrew part of the night, and I should have been pleased to spend the night thus occupied with so good a scholar.—Thur., 10th. Preached at C. church. My body wearied with labour and want of sleep.—Sun., 13th. Came to Georgetown, at Ogechee shoals, and found that Satan was there. I levelled away at the parable of the sower. Came to brother H.'s, and heard heavy tidings. My soul is calm. The Lord will look to His own house. I hastened to Scott's. Dr. Coke came in time to preach, and we opened Conference. We sat very closely to our work, and had some matters of moment to attend to.—Sun., 20th. There was a shaking among the people. After meeting I came away, and rode twenty miles that night. Dr. Coke stayed behind to preach at Ninety-six Town."

The Doctor, reverting to this last appointment, says that he preached in the court-house of that oddly-named town; that, from what he had heard, he expected to meet with hardly any but scoffers; but, instead of scorn, he had received the deepest attention, and in the course of the sermon almost every face was suffused with tears. On the 23d they crossed three large rivers, one of which they had to ford, the banks of which were steep and rocky. Coming in the course of this journey into a district belonging to a tribe of Indians, Coke stopped a little among them. They reared for him and his fellow-traveller a small rude tent in one of their fields, where they preached. Most of the tribe attended. Their chief, a grave old man, walked with "a mighty staff" in his hand. He wore a silver breastplate, and other ornaments of the same metal, suspended from his neck by bands of leather. The men and women had silver nose-rings. "But a few of the men were quite luxurious in their dress, even wearing ruffles and showy suits of clothes

made of cotton. One of their chief men came to Mr. Asbury and me before we began to preach, desiring us, in the name of his nation, to entreat the whites to assist them against some Indians, who, they had reason to believe, were at that time lurking in the neighbouring woods to destroy them. We found on inquiry that parties of Indians from a distant nation, whose inveteracy against this handful of people is not to be erased, have made frequent incursions among them. We have therefore spoken in behalf of this poor little nation, so far as prudence would justify us on so delicate a subject." A specimen of the old Indian spirit had been recently given in the case of a young woman of the tribe, who had become a mother. On taking her child to a gentleman residing in the neighbourhood, with the declaration that he was its father, only to find that he disowned it, she took the infant by the heels, dashed its brains out before his face, and left it on the ground!

The two bishops conferred about the possibility of doing something for this miserable people in the right way, and resolved first of all to establish a school among them. Since those days the Methodist Episcopal Church has had a large work in the evangelization of the Indians. At the present time it has a class of ministers specially devoted to their interests. The temporal concerns of the red people have been, also, greatly bettered by their connexion with the Methodist Church. "With the aid of government, it has provided from five to ten acres of ground for each Indian family which comes under its influence; and this land, it is said, can never be sold, leased, or rented, to or by a white man. By this philanthropic measure it is hoped that a feeling of attachment to the soil will be created among the Indians, and that they will cease to wander about, and be less liable to moral corruption by vicious emigrants and settlers. And some of these missions are in a promising condition. Several Indian converts have built themselves houses, and have been reclaimed from their roaming and restless habits. Others

have been brought to settle on farms or in villages around the missionary stations, so that the preachers express their hopes of a permanent work of God among their red converts. They report : ‘The Indians under the influence of our missions are all gradually improving in the arts of civilized life. Their religious experience is generally clear. Their attendance on the means of grace quite uniform. Their devotions are marked with great fervour and simplicity, yet free from excesses.’ They are steadfast in the Christian life and profession ; apostasy is very rare ; and so far from wasting away, as do the unconverted Indians, and as it had been supposed all the aborigines must waste away, all of them who have received the Gospel increase rapidly. On one occasion forty Indians had been converted to God, and on another as many as sixty. Bishop Janes has the supervision of these Indian missions ; and though they have been injured and retarded by white men, who have corrupted the converts by ‘fire-water,’ and by their profligacies, yet they are now in a very hopeful and promising condition.” *

“Cast thy bread on the waters ; thou shalt find it after many days.” Six years before, while on his American tour, Dr. Coke called on a family named Cowles, who were all of them unconverted. On taking leave, he gave them a little book, an Extract of Law’s Treatise on the Nature and Design of Christianity. By means of this tract the whole family were awakened to a sense of the importance and need of true religion. The eldest son, converted to God, had become a Methodist minister, and now made himself known to the Doctor, whom he greatly delighted, not only on his own account, but also by informing him that his mother and her six children, now all married, together with their husbands and wives, were all members of the Society.

The North-Carolina Conference, which began on the 2d of April at a place on the banks of the Yadkin, was a happy

* Jobson’s “America, and American Methodism.”

occasion. Thirty preachers were present, some of whom had come from the other side of the Apalachian mountains. These primitive men were mighty in prayer, and their intercourse was strongly marked by the spirit of devotion. "Every night before we concluded heaven itself seemed to be opened in our souls. One of the preachers was so blessed in the course of our prayers, that he was constrained to cry, 'I was never so happy in my life before. O, what a heaven of heavens do I feel!'" At each of these Conferences, the preachers, before they parted, held a lovefeast among themselves. Every man gave an account of his experience from the first stirrings of the Spirit of God, his call to preach, and the success with which the Lord had crowned his labours.

On their way to the Virginia Conference, they followed the windings of the broad river Dan, amid sylvan scenes of wood and dale, where, says the Doctor, "all was delightful, except the sight of a great cruel hawk which was devouring a little squirrel on a rock. The oaks have opened out their leaves; and the dogwood-tree, whose bark is medicinal, and whose innumerable white flowers form one of the finest ornaments of the forest, was in full bloom. The deep green of the pines, the bright transparent green of the oaks, and the fine white of the flowers of the dogwood, with other trees and shrubs, form such a complication of beauties as are indescribable to those who have only lived in countries entirely cultivated." He had now travelled eight hundred miles on horseback, often through pathless wilds, with no other waymark than what he calls "the preacher's mark, the split bush." From his explanation of this term, it appears that when a new Circuit was formed in those forest-countries, the preacher, wherever he came to an intricate part, split two or three of the branches on the side of the right track, that the way might be identified. Sometimes "the wicked who had discovered the secret" would split bushes in wrong places, to deceive the Methodist preachers.

In Virginia they held two Conferences: and in the town

of Richmond the Doctor preached in the capitol, or Senate-house, to "the most dressy congregation" he ever saw in America. Nevertheless they gave great attention while for an hour he argued against the prevailing infidel principles of the age, reasoning with "Deists, Socinians, and Arians."

Through a forest of cedars, whose spreading boughs solemnized his feelings by their grandeur, they arrived at Port-Royal, where a fashionable congregation had been waiting for him two hours; who, when he began to preach, "were as still as death." Some of the ladies requested another sermon on the following morning; but the Doctor was so pressed for time as to be obliged to decline.

But now came a soul-stirring event. After preaching, a merchant of the town had invited him to supper. "Soon after I came in, he observed that the Philadelphia paper had announced the death of Mr. Wesley.* At first I gave no credit to the account, yet entreated the favour of seeing the paper.....I saw by the account that it was true; that I had lost my friend, and the world had lost a burning and shining light."

At once Dr. Coke shaped his course for England, riding day and night to be in time for the packet at New-York. At Alexandria he received a letter from London, signifying the mournful news. "For near a day I was unable to weep; but afterwards some refreshing tears gave me almost inexpressible ease. On the 29th I crossed the Akatinke, down which I was carried in the flood on the never-to-be-forgotten 9th of March, 1785. How did my heart rise up in gratitude to my God! O, how often and how wonderfully has He preserved His sinful child!

"This day I passed over the noble river Potomac. The locust-tree grows in great abundance. The fruit grows in pods from twelve to eighteen inches long, and is very sweet. It is, probably, the same as that mentioned in Scripture as

* March 2d, 1791.

the food of John the Baptist.* We were now come into a country abounding with singing birds; but, alas! I could take but little pleasure in them. I felt, indeed, much communion with God; but the death of my venerable friend had cast such a shade of melancholy over my mind, that I could find little pleasure in the contemplation of nature. The night coming on very dark, it was with difficulty that my friend Cox and myself found our way through the woods to Bladensburg."

From this last place the Doctor reached Baltimore. He there preached a funeral sermon in reference to the death of Mr. Wesley, choosing for his text the words in 2 Kings ii. 12: "And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof."

As the packet was not to sail from New-York till the following Thursday, he took the coach from Baltimore in the hope of arriving in time. He had felt unwell for some hours, from an attack of rheumatism brought on by so much riding in the damps of the night. He gave orders at the inn where he slept to be called at two in the morning, but, on waking, found himself almost incapable of moving by the rigid pains of sciatica. After struggling in vain to rise, he was obliged to let the stage depart without him. A physician was called, and the means prescribed gave such relief that he felt it practicable to push forward on his journey. A friend lent him a horse, and he went some miles further; but just after nightfall the pains returned. A physician was again sent for, who laid an interdict on him for at least a day. He was therefore obliged to give up the hope of going by the New-York packet, and passed several days in recruiting his strength, and occasionally preaching, till on the 14th of May he embarked in the ship "William Penn," bound for London.

In passing from town to town in these late rapid journeyings, Dr. Coke found the pulpits of the churches hung with

* This opinion is not affirmed here.

the black drapery of mourning, and that a solemn recognition of the reverence due to the memory of the illustrious dead was being offered in the discourses of the ministry. At New-York Bishop Asbury preached a funeral sermon on Mr. Wesley's death before thirty ministers and an immense congregation, from the text of St. Paul: "But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me."

CHAPTER XIV.

FOURTH INTERVAL, IN ENGLAND AND FRANCE.

WHEN, after a tolerably pleasant voyage, the "William Penn" neared the English coast, Dr. Coke felt great anxiety to land as soon as possible; and, not wishing to be detained while the ship crept round to the Thames, he embraced the opportunity afforded by falling-in with some Cornish fishing-boats, off the Land's End, to get on shore, and take an overland journey to London. On landing he made the fishermen a present of three guineas, and proceeded at once to Redruth, and from thence to Truro, to take coach for Exeter and the metropolis. From Redruth to Truro he was accompanied by his friend, the Rev. Jonathan Crowther, sen., then stationed at the former town; and, as they rode over the commons, Mr. Crowther recounted to the Doctor the things that had lately befallen the Connexion on the death of their Founder, and the measures which had been set in operation to meet the exigencies of the time. He learned that the idea most prevalent among the preachers was, that the Connexion would be more strongly consolidated by forming it into what may be called a diocesan commonwealth. The whole territory of Methodism should be divided into Districts, each composed of a group of neighbouring Circuits, and each placed under the supervision of an *episcopus*, or "Chairman," elected from among the ministers of the District, not for life, or for a term of years, but for a year only at a time. In like manner, the Conference, consisting of the hundred men registered in the Poll-Deed, and their successors, with the rest of their brethren in the ministry as co-assessors, should be constituted under the supervision of a President, elected also for the current

year only. The notion of a successor to Mr. Wesley, who should inherit the autocratic power which had belonged to him by providential right, and as such had been respectfully acknowledged both by preachers and people while he lived, was now altogether laid aside. Neither Mather, who had been ordained a superintendent for England, nor Doctor Coke, who had received like ordination for America, nor any other man, would have the slightest chance of being recognised as a second Wesley. And, moreover, that some of the most eminent of the preachers, Thompson, Bradburn, Thomas Taylor, Pawson, and others, had recently met at Halifax, and, preparing a draft of the new territorial arrangement to be submitted to the approaching Conference, had addressed a circular letter to the ministers in the different Circuits, to explain the plan, and request them to take immediate measures for such an organization. Mr. Crowther has left a memorandum to the effect that when, in thus conversing with Dr. Coke, he gave him the detail of what had been actually done in the formation of these Districts, the Doctor made the audible reflection,—“It is a weight too great to attempt to wield.”

It was: and if, as was commonly supposed, he had aspired (though we cannot affirm nor deny it) to the patriarchate of the Methodist communion, he showed at once both wisdom and grace in quelling the desire for ever, and in addressing himself, as a fellow-labourer with his brethren in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, to those duties in which both he and they would best promote the supreme design for which they lived. The Methodistical decisions which were then being made were, no doubt, the right ones. When Wesley ceased to live, his peculiar work was done, and could not be continued by another man. Endowed by his Creator and Sanctifier with a super-ordinary sagacity, and a decisive will, whose very inflexibleness was that of love, he ruled in the church with but little opposition. Coke had respectable talents for government, as we see, on the whole, in his admi-

nistration in England and America ; but there was but one Wesley. The preachers were thankful for one, but would have no other. No man should be the rival of their sainted father, except in a respect in which every one of them would try to stand on the same level with himself,—in charity to mankind, and in love to God.

When Dr. Coke reached London, and had conferred with his friends, he prepared to attend the Irish Conference, where, as we have seen, he had been in the habit of presiding by the appointment of Mr. Wesley. He was now, however, strongly advised not to go ; and that advice was given from a delicacy to his own feelings. Well aware of the prejudice which prevailed just then about the Doctor's supposed ambition, his friends apprehended that some token of that prejudice would give itself expression in a manner that might pain him. He wavered for a time in indecision, but at length resolved to go, and went accordingly. As had been presaged, it came to pass. The preachers appeared to wish to give him once for all a plain intimation of their resolve, and he was not permitted to take the presidential chair. The Doctor submitted with meekness. Not but there were men among the Irish Conference who, warmly attached to him, would have tried hard to insure his elevation ; but he himself would have been the last to wish, at that critical hour, to risk the peace and unity of the Connexion by any candidature which would involve a conflict of interests. No man had a greater abhorrence of discord and schism than he. He used to say that he "would not have a hand in anything that would tend to a division in the Societies, for ten thousand worlds ;" and the same disposition led him now, in this merely personal affair, to acquiesce at once in the decision of his brethren, and to address himself to the great public concerns which both he and they had equally at heart.

The first English Conference after the death of Wesley followed, as usual, the Irish one. The same feeling with regard to a personal successorship to Mr. Wesley showed itself

again in the election to the office of president, not of Mr. Mather or Dr. Coke, but of Mr. William Thompson; of whom it is enough to say, that his character, talents, and ministerial life rendered him every way worthy of the high distinction which the ministers now conferred. They nevertheless manifested their esteem for Dr. Coke by choosing him as the first secretary of the Conference; an office which for many subsequent years he discharged with great efficiency. The Conference had assembled in Manchester, whither the preachers had repaired with forebodings which, through the mercy of God, proved to be ungrounded. The great questions which pressed on their attention were discussed in a temperate, devout, and self-denying spirit. The consequence was, that they met and parted more firmly united than ever. "I have been," wrote Adam Clarke, "at several Conferences, but have never seen one in which the spirit of unity, love, and a sound mind so generally prevailed. I would have this intelligence transmitted from Dan to Beersheba; and let the earth know that the dying words of our revered father have their accomplishment:—'THE LORD IS WITH US.'"

I waive all notice of the economic arrangements which were now unfolding themselves in the new era opening on the Methodist Church, and restrict myself to matters which relate more personally to the subject of our memoir. On his arrival from America, it was notified to Dr. Coke, by the executors, that Mr. Wesley had in his Will appointed him one of the trustees of his papers and manuscripts, "to be burned or published, as they might think proper:" a charge which involved the Doctor for several months in some unpleasant complications. The executors, Messrs. Horton, Wolff, and Marriott, in proceeding to administer the Will, found that Mr. Wesley had bequeathed all his property (consisting entirely of printed books and copyrights) to the Connexion, subject to a charge of the sum of £1,600, due by marriage-settlement to his brother's widow,* and to certain conditions specified in

* See Note 15.

the Will ; but that, about six months before his decease, he had executed a Deed by which he gave all his " books, tracts, pamphlets, and stock in trade, and all his copyright to all books which he had already printed or might afterwards print, unto Thomas Coke, Alexander Mather, Peard Dickinson, John Valton, James Rogers, Joseph Taylor, and Adam Clarke, to the intent that they should apply all the profits of the said books, &c., unto the sole use and benefit of the Conference of the people called Methodists, as established by a Deed-poll under the hand and seal of the said John Wesley, bearing date 28th of February, 1784, and enrolled in his Majesty's High Court of Chancery." By this testamentary Deed the seven trustees therein named were requested and authorized with all convenient speed to discharge such debts as Mr. Wesley should owe at the time of his death, out of the property of the said books, and so forth ; and also to pay any legacies or annuities which he should have bequeathed by his Will.

This Deed, it will be perceived, recognised the bequests of the Will, and was designed to secure the surplus of the property, and whatever it should produce by the operations of the Book-Room, for the sustentation of the Methodist agencies. Between the provisions of the two documents there was, therefore, a perfect moral and legal harmony. The executors, however, entertained an opinion, strengthened by professional advice, that the Deed was at variance with the Will, and resolved to oppose any claim which might be made upon it. They also asserted a power of control over the affairs of the Book-Room, though Mr. Wesley had plainly shown it to be his purpose that the general direction of the business of that concern should be vested in the Conference.

The preachers in their assembly at Manchester were unanimous in this view of the case ; and, in their several interviews with the executors, they offered, by raising a loan for the purpose, to pay off the debt of £1,600 with which the bequest was charged, and then administer the proceeds of the bequest

for carrying on the work of the Gospel according to the plan of the testator. The executors nevertheless held by their claim to the direction of the whole property. But they were shown that, even if they had a power over the property of which Mr. Wesley died possessed, it could not extend to those developments of the concern which might arise out of it by the literary and other labours of the preachers. Hereupon the three gentlemen put in a paper to the effect that they could not legally nor conscientiously divest themselves of the trust reposed in them, or extend its administration beyond the designs of the testator. And to the objection which was urged against their view, in the existence of the Deed which vested the property in the seven clerical trustees, they replied that they "had taken advice respecting that document, and had been informed that it was good for nothing." The Conference then proposed that the executors should be incorporated with the trustees, as joint administrators of the property; and, should this overture be rejected, rather than the Book-Room should be exclusively directed by the executors, they were resolved to relinquish their interest in the bequest, and to establish a new book-concern under their own unfettered management. This resolve they expressed in a memorandum, in which they return the executors their sincere thanks for the trouble they have taken in the fulfilment of their office, and beg to notify that they would resign their claim and right to the whole stock of books of which Mr. Wesley was possessed at the time of his death, and would next purchase the said stock of them, the executors, for such a sum of money as would enable them to discharge every obligation which might be upon them on account of Mr. Wesley's Will.

The executors, who throughout manifested the greatest courtesy, along with an inflexible adhesion to what they considered the dictates of integrity and honour, had been labouring all the while under a false conception about the invalidity of the Deed which constituted the seven preachers trustees of the book-property, and about their own prerogative as being

by the provisions of the Will exclusively seised of the property itself for the purposes described by the testator. When, however, on returning to London, they consulted the solicitor-general (Scott, Lord Eldon) and the king's advocate, and were informed by those high authorities that the Deed itself was testamentary, and superseded the Will in respect to the books, copyrights, &c., as being made subsequently to the Will, they immediately notified to the trustees this new aspect of the case, and their decision to give up their probate in the Prerogative Court. Upon this adjustment, the trustees proceeded to take out letters of administration, and the entire disposition of the property passed to the Conference, with whom the trustees were identified; they having provided the executors with the means of discharging all the liabilities of the Will.

Another troublesome affair occurred from some rival projects for a biography of Mr. Wesley. Very soon after the decease of that venerable man it was announced that a Memoir of his Life was in preparation by Mr. John Hampson, a preacher who had seceded from the Methodist body under circumstances which seemed to warrant an apprehension that he would not prove himself an impartial biographer. In this feeling the executors fully concurred with the preachers; and, being resolved to promote the publication of an authentic and standard memoir, they put forth an advertisement cautioning "the friends of Mr. Wesley, and the public in general, against receiving any spurious or hasty accounts of his life; as three gentlemen to whom he had bequeathed his manuscripts and other papers would publish an authentic narrative as soon as it could be prepared for the press."

The three gentlemen referred to were Dr. Coke, Mr. Moore, and Dr. Whitehead, a physician. But the two former were so overwhelmed with the duties of their ministerial office as to render the task highly impracticable; and with their full consent it devolved upon the latter. To him the various MSS. were accordingly confided. And, as it could not be expected that a professional man should devote himself gratuitously to the

performance of such a work, Dr. Whitehead proposed to Mr. Rogers, the superintendent of the London Circuit, that the author of the biography should be paid one hundred pounds for his trouble and loss of time. The executors and the printing committee thereupon agreed to give him a hundred guineas. This arrangement was concluded about a week before the Conference met, and was confirmed by that body, though not without some misgiving. Many of the preachers had but little confidence in Dr. Whitehead; and his "antece-dents" appear to have justified that uncertainty. A Methodist preacher, a Quaker, a Churchman, and a Methodist again, by turns,—his versatility of disposition had by no means edified them or others. They nevertheless concurred in the appointment, with the stipulation that Mr. Moore should examine the whole of Mr. Wesley's papers before their contents were published.

Here followed a variety of circumvolutions on the part of Dr. Whitehead. A hundred guineas for a work which, were he to publish it on his own account, might yield him two thousand, appeared on reflection to be too trifling a return; and he announced his intention to write the book for himself, or, if published at the Conference Office, on the condition of his receiving one half of the profits, the copyright remaining his own. The Book-Committee declined to sanction this change, but, for the sake of peace, offered to make his fee two hundred guineas. This proffer was on his side declined. An arbitration was then proposed; three friends on each part. On meeting, the doctor's representatives laid it down as a basis that the copyright must be his own. The three preachers decidedly refused, and the meeting at once dissolved. The ministers' committee then renewed an offer, formerly made, that the author should have half the profits of the work for two years; provided the work should be read by them in manuscript and approved. Dr. Whitehead replied, that he would not submit his writings to any person whatever. Every form of negotiation being thus unfruitful, the committee had no other alternative than that

of requesting the other two legatees of the Wesley MSS. to undertake jointly the preparation of a memoir to be published at the Book-Room for the benefit of the Connexion.* To this Dr. Coke and Mr. Moore, pressed as they were by peculiar duties, felt constrained to accede; and accordingly they addressed themselves to their task. But wishing, of course, to avail themselves of the papers bearing on the history they were to compose, they had the mortification, on his account as well as their own, to find that Dr. Whitehead, to whom, as one of the trustees, and as the intended author of the biography, they had been confided, refused altogether to give them up. As co-trustees they had as great a right to the custody of the MSS. as himself, and might have soon made good their claim in law; but they were weary of altercation, and left the case to be adjudged at the tribunal of conscience.

Their own knowledge of Mr. Wesley's history rendered them independent of those circumstantial aids in great part; and each of them, with head and heart full fraught with clear and loving apprehensions of their subject, contributed his share to the memoir, as opportunity served, amid the continual calls of their public duties. In this way the volume was completed for the press in the course of the following year.

At this time, 1792, Mr. Wilberforce had fully entered upon his illustrious career as the friend of the slave. While the Conference was in session, he sent to the president, secretary, and each member of the assembly, a copy of the "Evidence lately given before a Select Committee of the House of Commons relative to the Slave-Trade," accompanied by a letter in which he paid a tribute of respect to their piety and zeal, and called upon them to lend him their co-operation in promoting petitions to the legislature for the speedy abolition of that horrid traffic. This was an appeal which struck a deep chord in the soul of Dr. Coke, and which, on the part of himself and his brethren, called forth not only their respectful

* Vide Smith's "History of Methodism," vol. ii., p. 215.

reply in written words, but the practical employment of their influence among the people in that and following years for the accomplishment of his philanthropic and holy designs.

A new era had also opened on the Continent; and the French Revolution, then working its way in events which roused all nations, had awakened in many minds a hope that the great principles of social liberty, which had unfolded such beneficent effects in England, were about to uplift the masses of the continental peoples to the possession of advantages akin to our own. Awake to these hopeful though fallacious prognostics, Dr. Coke would persuade himself that the moment was favourable for an attempt to introduce an evangelic agency into the French metropolis. He regarded the fall of the Bastille as a signal that the barriers of intolerance which had heretofore shut out the Gospel from that people were doomed to the same overthrow; and, anxious to enter in at the first breach, he proposed immediately after Conference to pass over into France on a rapid tour of observation. His hope of being able to commence an actual mission there was strengthened by learning that an overture had been made to the Countess of Huntingdon some time before, from certain persons in Paris, expressive of their willingness to receive a minister of her communion; but that distinguished lady had died before making provision for gratifying their wish. The Doctor, however, considered this circumstance a corroborative token that Providence called the Methodists to enter upon the work; and, as time pressed, he made no delay to put the matter to the issue of a trial. Leaving London on the 17th of September, in company with Mr. Gibson, a mercantile gentleman, he proceeded to the Channel Islands for the purpose of securing the services of M. De Queteville, a preacher who had been for some years labouring among the French-speaking people in Jersey and Guernsey. On the 22d he ordained M. De Queteville a deacon, and then a presbyter; and on the following day they hired a sloop to carry them over to Grandville. Landing there, they proceeded on foot

toward the city of Coutances, entertained on their way at the château of an old nobleman in infirm health, who received them with much good-will, listened to their evangelic words, and joined in their devotions. On parting he asked for a Bible, intimating that their principles were more welcome to his heart than those of the Church in which he had been brought up, and expressing a wish to see them again. Moving on, they spent the night at Coutances, and next day visited Courseule, a small town on the coast, where the Methodist missionary, Mr. William Mahy, had been already ministering to a Protestant congregation, and to five or six other small flocks in the neighbouring parishes.* Dr. Coke now ordained him; and they then made the best of their way to Caen, from whence in the lumbering diligence they passed through the country to Paris, which they reached after a journey of three days. Here, with some trouble and research, they ascertained the persons who had written to Lady Huntingdon. They proved to be two Englishmen who were making a precarious living by teaching their native language. They told the Doctor that, if he would hire a suitable place, he would be sure to have a crowded audience. In the course of his explorations for this purpose he found a spacious church, which with many more had been lately suppressed, and was informed that he might obtain it by purchase. A negotiation was commenced with the commissioners for confiscated ecclesiastical property, and an agreement made for the sale of the building for a hundred and twenty pounds sterling. While this transaction was in progress, they hired a room in a densely-crowded street close by the river, and, after suitable advertisement, M. De Queteville commenced his work: but a congregation of just thirty-six persons, partly English, and a few dispirited French Protestants, gave them but faint encouragement. It was then announced that the Rev. Dr. Coke, an English divine, of the university of Oxford, would read on

* See Note 16.

the following day a lecture in French. At the time appointed a congregation mustered consisting of six persons. Among the teeming multitudes who thronged the neighbourhood, and who had been invited to hear the Gospel, scarcely one seemed to entertain a thought that could lead him to wish to respond to a call so "*drôle*." So little, indeed, were they disposed to tolerate the presence of these "English divines," that their stay among them could only have been prolonged at the risk of life. I have heard Madame Hocart, the excellent daughter of M. De Queteville, say, that her father, in relating their adventure in Paris, used to tell how the people would warn them that, if they did not take their departure in peace, they would hang them to the lamp-posts. Under these circumstances Dr. Coke was obliged to conclude that the present was not the time to persist in the undertaking, but that it would be his duty to watch for a more favourable opening. By the kind offices of a friend,* who had some influence with the commissioner, he was absolved from his engagement as purchaser of the old church, and deemed it best to return, without further loss of time, to the cultivation of fields which gave greater assurance of a harvest. For France at that time there was no hope. The people seemed utterly debased. Bad as French society may be at present, its condition in the last century was infinitely worse. Faith had perished, and moral principle lingered only in the bosoms of a few. The upper classes were, if possible, more corrupt than the populace. Such books as the Memoirs of Lauzun, and the curious pamphlet-literature of the times, which reveal iniquities that would never be conceived by the minds of ordinary sinners, give terrible proof of it. With incessant efforts to sustain a factitious gaiety, the people at large were without hope, because without God. "This Paris," says a man of the town, who wrote at the time, "the city of amusements and pleasures, where four-fifths of the inhabitants die of grief, and

* See "Life of Dr. A. Clarke," p. 371.

where the friendship of the court itself has been the good faith of foxes and the society of wolves.”* Besides, the days then passing were days of judgment, because mercy had been rejected. What had been of late endured proved to be but the beginning of sorrows. The reign of terror was at hand; and, while the black cloud uprose, the accents of grace died on the lips of the evangelist, and the angel of destruction spread his wings.

Returning to his more hopeful employment in England, Dr. Coke passed several months in itinerating among the Circuits, and connecting with his ministrations of the Gospel a systematic appeal, in public and private, for the means of diffusing it more widely abroad. He did also what he could, as occasion served, in contributing to the forthcoming Memoir of Mr. Wesley. But the main conduct of that work devolved on Mr. Moore. I remember hearing him say, that among other hindrances which occurred to the Doctor while the book was in progress, one was from an accident to his right hand by the overturning of a kettle of boiling water. What amount Dr. Coke really contributed to the volume cannot be stated with certainty. In a letter to his friend Churchey, dated March 14th, 1792, he says: “The last sheet is now in the press. Our volume is not large enough to contain a tenth part of the precious anecdotes of Mr. Wesley. We have been obliged to select. We do not intend to print the names of the subscribers. They would take a hundred pages in small letter, and would raise the book in price. I think we have near ten thousand subscribers.” The first edition of ten thousand copies went off at once, and a second was brought out before July. Mr. Moore told me that the book cleared seventeen hundred pounds in two months.

The merit of that biography is well understood. It is a plain simple narrative, by men who were thoroughly acquainted

* *Paris, ville d'amusemens, des plaisirs, &c., où les quatre cinquièmes des habitans meurent de chagrin..... Amitié de cour, foi des renards, et société des loups.*—Chamfort, *Caractères et Anecdotes.*

with the eminent person whose character they bring out to view, not in philosophic disquisitions, but by a straightforward recital of the actions of his life, with some of which they themselves had been associated. Their unpretending work is, therefore, a contribution of most essential value to some future biography of Wesley that will answer to the just ideal of the man which the survey of his career in its true perspective, and the meditation of his sublime character, are now enabling good men of every Church to form. The two heavier volumes subsequently published by Mr. Moore will have the same use; and, along with the rival work of Dr. Whitehead, the well-written but too worldly-minded production of Southey, the vigorous and accurate sketch by Watson, and the high-toned essays of Orlando Dobbin and Isaac Taylor, will form materials for a history of the Methodist apostle worthy of his imperishable name.

At the Conference of 1792, held in London, Dr. Coke was again elected to the secretariate, and Alexander Mather presided. In the Methodist circles where the episcopal idea was in favour, there was now the gratification of seeing Mr. Wesley's two "superintendents" at the head of the Connexion. Among the regulations adopted we find one, that "no ordinations shall take place in the Methodist body without the consent of the Conference first obtained."* Service in church-hours was not to be introduced in any new place without the same consent. A resolution was made, and no doubt called for by the prevailing spirit of the times, to "beware of speaking lightly or irreverently of the government under which we live; remembering that the oracles of God command us to be subject to the higher powers, and that honour to the king is connected by them with the fear of God." Before the ministers parted, on discussing the grand question how they could more effectually promote the work of the Gospel, they offered anew the vow of fidelity: "We do

* See Note 17.

at this solemn midnight hour devote ourselves to the service of Almighty God in a more unreserved and entire manner than heretofore, and are all determined to spend and be spent in the blessed work. And this our solemn dedication we do unanimously signify by rising from our seats in the presence of the Lord."

In the spirit of that holy resolution Dr. Coke entered upon a new year of labour. He had made preparation for another voyage, desirous of carrying out additional help to the missions in the West Indies, and of fulfilling his engagements in the widely-spreading Church in the States of America. Of the progress the good work was making among the latter he had been informed by his friend Asbury in a letter, from which we will transcribe some characteristic paragraphs :—

"Reverend and most dear Sir,—If yet in time, this brings greeting. Rejoice with me that the last has been a general blessing to the church of God in this wilderness. We humbly hope two thousand souls were born of God, one of which is well ascertained in Jersey and York.

"I have served the church upwards of twenty-five years in Europe and America. All the property I have gained is two old horses, the constant companions of my toil six if not seven thousand miles every year. When we have no ferry-boats, they swim the rivers. As to clothing, I am nearly the same as at first ; neither have I silver, nor gold, nor any other property. My confidential friends know that I lie not in these matters. I am resolved not to claim any property in the printing-concern. Increase as it may, it will be sacred to invalid preachers, the colleges, and the schools. I would not have my name mentioned as doing, having, or being anything but dust.*

"I soar, indeed, but it is over the tops of the highest mountains we have, which may vie with the Alps. I creep sometimes upon my hands and knees up the slippery ascent ;

* See Note 18.

and to serve the church, and the ministers of it, what I gain is many a reflection from both sides of the Atlantic. I have lived long enough to be loved and hated, to be admired and feared.

“If it were not for the suspicions of some, and the pride and ignorance of others, I am of opinion I could make provision by collections, profits on books, and donations in land, to take two thousand children under the best plan of education ever known in this country. The Lord begins to smile on our Kingswood school. One promising young man is gone forth, another is ready, and several have been under awakenings. None so healthy or orderly as our children, and some promise great talents. The obstinate and ignorant oppose, among preachers and people; while the judicious in Church and State admire and applaud.”

The self-denying generosity of this man's soul found a true response in that of his friend. Coke and Asbury were baptized into the same spirit, and each displayed its beneficent effects in his own way; Asbury, in the abnegation which restrained him from receiving of the Church's wealth, while he toiled so hard for her advancement; Coke, in freely giving from the bounty with which Providence had endowed him, while he too laboured, with no stipend, in the same cause. In this unworldly course of conduct his inherited patrimony was fast passing away; but in the treasures of eternity there gathered, for the great hereafter, the riches that endure. And already the inward consolations of grace gave Divine pledges to his heart of the exceeding great reward. His soul could magnify the Lord, and his spirit rejoiced in God his Saviour. He could sing with the Hebrew hymn, “He divides the sea before me; He reveals His light to my eyes: the sounds of His love are in my ears: the pavilion of my Beloved is spread over me: my bells utter the voice of thanksgiving, and my cinnamon sends forth its perfumes.”*

* Ahaba for Passover.

CHAPTER XV

FIFTH VOYAGE OUT.

THE perils of the great deep are only encountered in most cases at the promptings of urgent motives : by the sailor, for the means of living ; the invalid, for restoration ; the merchant, for honest gain ; the adventurer, for the chances of fortune ; the man of science, to enlarge the stores of knowledge by the exploration of nature, whether in the night-skies of another hemisphere, or the fauna and flora of untrodden wildernesses. The statesman goes to take the government of foreign provinces, and the soldier to do the work that wins them. But the true missionary of Jesus Christ goes forth over the watery mountains to reach souls that are perishing, and to renew the life of nations.

The shores of England again receded from the Doctor's sight, while the good ship beat her way through the swelling flood. Counting his homeward as well as outward voyages, he was now upon his ninth. It commenced on the 1st of September ; and he was accompanied by Mr. Graham, a new missionary, whom, on his way to his American visitation, he intended to station in the West Indies. Mr. Graham suffered immensely, both from the usual malady of the sea, and an attack of illness which brought him well nigh to a watery grave. But Dr. Coke, however he might sympathize with his afflicted companion, was by this time an old sailor, and found great enjoyment among the grand scenes of the ocean-world. " We had this evening a most beautiful sunset. A great cloud, like a mountain of flaming fire, stood, apparently, above and upon the sun. Just above this cloudy mountain of fire was a smaller one, equally splendid, exactly in the shape of a

crown ; and the horizon to the right and left seemed all on fire. Some of the men came to the head of the ship to view it, and confessed that, as many years as they had been at sea, they never beheld such a setting sun. We can view God in all things."

Much of his time on this voyage was spent in hard study. I should have said that at the late Conference he had been requested to undertake a Commentary on the Holy Scriptures ; and, having with much serious thought and feeling arrived at a resolution to endeavour to comply with the call, he devoted the leisure now afforded him to the commencement of that long and laborious task. "I find a ship a most convenient place for study," (the Doctor's experience in this respect is somewhat different from that of many other voyagers,) "though it is sometimes a great exercise for my feet, legs, and arms, to keep myself steady to write. From the time I rise till bed-time, except during meals, I have the cabin-table to myself, and work at it incessantly. I never was accustomed to dream much till now ; but I seem to be at my pleasing work even whilst I sleep." This shows that his application was too great to that particular branch of study. The brain was overwrought by it, and might have been relieved by an occasional transition to other themes or engagements. Southey tells us that in his literary labours he made it a rule to have two or three works in progress simultaneously ; and that, when he had exercised his mind so much upon one that it haunted him in sleep, he laid it by a few days for another, and was successful in this way in keeping the brain from exhaustion.

Dr. Coke mentions also the pleasure which some canary-birds gave him by their music in his cabin, and refers to them more than once in terms which show that this brave man and spiritual hero had the dispositions of a little child.—"October 8th. One of the canary-birds, through the neglect of the steward, died for want of food. Sorry was I that the innocent creature which had often entertained me should suffer so

miserable a death, for want of sacrificing three minutes in the day to examine the cages. For, though none of the birds are mine, I possess as much property in their music as any one. The little creature sang almost incessantly the morning preceding its death; hoping, I suppose, to gain our attention, and induce us to fill its seed-box. A misfortune of this kind may seem ridiculous to many on land; but to those who are surrounded by an immense ocean the loss of a favourite bird is great, and their feelings will at least be excused by ingenuous minds.

“October 9th.—On a sudden the weather is changed from very fair to be rainy, dark, and gloomy. What a comfort it is to be able to retire unto God at all times, in all places, and in all weathers! This is my birth-day. I am now forty-five. Let me take a view of my past life.....What is the sum of all? What have I done? And what am I? I have done nothing; no, nothing; and I am a sinner. God be merciful to me!

“13th.—Now there is a change of wind in our favour, and a possibility that I shall gain the desired port in time: nevertheless, Father, not my will, but Thine, be done. 20th.—I renewed my covenant with God this morning, in as solemn and happy a temper as ever I experienced, my first espousals to God not excepted. 21st.—The comfortable frame of mind I experienced yesterday still continues. How kind is our Lord in giving His children such heavenly cordials in the course of their pilgrimage!”

They fell in with a French brig on her way homeward. She hailed them to ask the longitude, which was given. While still within hearing, the English mate called to them in French, “The king is a prisoner, and all the Swiss guards are murdered.” The Frenchman at once turned his ship about, and came up with them, the captain backing his sails to give them opportunity. They had a long talk about the state of things in France, which the foreigners devoured with the utmost eagerness. On parting company, the Frenchman once

more returned, and with native politeness inquired whether he could be so happy as to supply them with anything his ship afforded. This was, probably, the last courteous interview between French and Englishmen on the high seas for many years.

The Doctor was very well pleased with both captain and crew on this voyage. The captain himself desired to have prayers, and used to enter into his log-book the times when worship was solemnized. One of the steerage-passengers, who was a Methodist, much ingratiated himself with the sailors by his exemplary spirit and behaviour. "That man," said they, "is a Christian." Another of the passengers wrote the Doctor a note of thanks for his ministerial attentions, and expressed himself as truly concerned for the salvation of his soul. The mate also, in private conversation on the same great question, was sometimes moved to tears. This voyage of mercies terminated on the 30th of October; when Dr. Coke landed at Newcastle, in the state of Delaware. Leaving Mr. Graham in the ship, to go round with her to Philadelphia, he ascertained that he had seventy miles to ride in the space of a day and a few hours, to be in time for the General Conference in Baltimore. This he accomplished in a one-horse chaise. Part of it he did that day, lying down for a short time at a place called Head of Elk, and starting again by moonlight. He travelled all the day, having succeeded in obtaining a change of horses. Just after dark in the evening, when within a few hours of Baltimore, the chaise was overturned by the stump of a tree. The Doctor got but little injury, but the driver hurt his collar-bone and head. They were not able to right the chaise and horse till Providence brought a traveller to the spot, who gave them the needed help. Dr. Coke finished the journey with emotions of gratitude. "How astonishing is the loving-kindness of my God! How innumerable the dangers, seen and unseen, from which He is continually delivering me!

‘O, how shall words with equal warmth
The gratitude declare
That glows within my ravish’d heart?
But Thou canst read it there!’ ”

The preachers, with Bishop Asbury, had already assembled at Baltimore for their quadrennial Conference. I will take the reader back a few days by a peep into Asbury’s journal. “Friday, September 22d.—I came to Broad-Creek, with a heavy heart. We had a blessed time at the lovefeast; many souls longing for sanctification, and some boldly professing it. 26th.—At Myles’s chapel. Attended Quarterly-meeting. The second day we had a few Church-folks. Something wild. 28th.—Virginia. Crossed the Potomac. I had a large congregation at Garrettson chapel. Much blessed on Rom. viii. 29. Had a comfortable conference with the leaders, stewards, local preachers, and exhorters. Sunday, October 1st.—We had a crowded congregation, and some melting among the people, while I enlarged on ‘Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.’ I endeavoured to point out the genuine marks of a Christian, to remove objections, and to persuade by applying hopes and fears. 2d.—I had a kind of chill and headache, yet rode about forty miles, and went quick to bed.....Thence rode to Choptank, and preached on Ephes. ii. 17; and some power went through the house. Had a good conversation with the local brethren, making close inquiries relative to themselves, their families, and the Societies to which they belong. I stopped a day at Judge White’s, and read in haste the most essential parts of Jefferson’s ‘Notes.’” Here Asbury makes a remark which may be liable to discussion: “I have thought it may be safer to be occasionally among the people of the world, than wholly confined to the indulgent people of God. He who sometimes suffers from a famine will the better know how to relish a feast.” * “Saturday, 14th.—We had many at Broadley’s barn. I was greatly

* Note 19.

weakened by preaching, but hope souls were strengthened. We had a gracious season with the local brethren, men who felt for the cause of God. Tuesday, 15th.—Preached on ‘Thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.’ We had a great lovefeast. Monday.—Rode to Charleston. 1 John ii. 18. I was very pointed, at which some were offended. Saturday, 21st.—Rode to Back-Creek. Did not get in till after night. Unwell. Monday, 23d.—Cokesbury. All is not well here. Saturday.—Baltimore. Here only stopped to feed self and horses. Sunday, 29th.—Rode to Annapolis. Sermon on 1 Peter iii. 18, with some help and liberty. 30th.—Our district Conference. Tuesday, 31st.—Came to Baltimore in a storm of rain. While we were sitting in the room at Mr. Rogers’s, in came Dr. Coke, of whose arrival we had not heard, and whom we embraced with great love.

“I felt awfully at the General Conference, which began November 1st. At my desire they appointed a moderator, and a preparatory committee, to keep order, and bring forward the business with regularity. We had heavy debates on the first, second, and third sections of our Form of Discipline.”

We remark, in explanation, that though the ecclesiastical constitution adopted in 1784 had worked well upon the whole,—the Methodist Episcopal Church having extended her area from Massachusetts to Georgia, with a membership of sixty-six thousand, and a ministry of two hundred and sixty pastors, embodied in twenty Conferences,—there nevertheless prevailed among the preachers a certain degree of discontent, from a feeling that the power of the bishop to appoint them wherever he pleased required some restriction. It was this, with other matters of moment, that had led the Council (composed of the bishops and presiding elders) to agree upon the calling of the present general assembly at Baltimore. A resolution was to be brought forward, to the effect “that after the bishop appoints the preachers to their several Circuits, if any one think himself injured by the appointment, he shall have liberty to appeal to the Conference; and, if it approve his

objections, the bishop shall appoint him to some other Circuit." This resolution would bring the whole subject of the prerogatives of the episcopacy under discussion, and especially the episcopal acts of Mr. Asbury, who, wishing the entire matter to be fully canvassed, refrained in those hours from being personally present.

"My power to station the preachers without an appeal," he continues, "was much debated. I gave the matter wholly up to them [to consider], and sent them the following letter:—

"My dear brethren,—Let my absence give you no pain. Dr. Coke presides. I am happily excused from assisting to make laws by which I myself am to be governed. I have only to obey and execute. I am happy in the consideration that I never stationed a preacher through enmity, or as a punishment. I have acted for the glory of God, the good of the people, and to promote the usefulness of the preachers. Are you sure that, if you please yourselves, the people will be as fully satisfied? They often say, 'Let us have such a preacher;' and sometimes, 'We will not have such an one.' Perhaps I must say, 'His appeal forced him upon you.' I am one, ye are many. I am as willing to serve you as ever. I want not to sit in any man's way. I scorn to solicit votes. Speak your minds freely; but, remember, you are only making laws for the present time: it may be that, as in some other things, so in this, a future day may give you further light."

Thus far Bishop Asbury. "The Conference," Dr. Coke says in his journal, "continued for fifteen days. I had always entertained very high ideas of the piety and zeal of the American preachers, and of the considerable abilities of many; but had no expectation, I confess, that the debates would be carried on in so very masterly a manner; so that, on every question of importance, the subject seemed to be considered in every possible light. Throughout the debates they conducted themselves as the servants of the people; and therefore never lost sight of them on any question. Indeed, the single eye, and spirit of humility, manifested by the preachers throughout

the Conference, were extremely pleasing, and afforded a comfortable prospect of the increase of the work of God in the whole continent."

The discussion on the episcopacy, which lasted several days with great animation, resulted in a large majority in favour of continuing the full power in the hands of the bishops.* They went also through the Form of Discipline at large, the Articles of Faith, the offices for Baptism, Orders, Matrimony, and the Burial of the Dead. Asbury preached on the text of St. Peter, "Finally, be ye all of one mind; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous;" and Coke wound up the session by a discourse from St. James,—“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” A solemn awe rested on the congregation. “The meeting,” says he, “was continued till about midnight; and twelve persons, we have reason to believe, were adopted into the family of God. This was a glorious conclusion, a gracious seal from heaven to our proceedings.”

Thus far all was well. Among the majority who had voted for the *status quo*, a sense of unanimity gave strength to their hopes of a future of prosperity and peace. But, as is not unusual in such contests, the minority, smarting under their defeat, retired from the Conference with other feelings. This was especially the case with the leader of the opposition movement, the Rev. James O’Kelly, a man of popular talent, but troubled with a turbulent and ambitious spirit. He had exercised the office of a presiding elder in some of the districts of Virginia for several years, but had of late perverted more and more the trust reposed in him, by exciting dissatisfaction among the people, whom, in fulfilling the duties of his station, he should have trained in the tranquil observance of their

* In 1827 the question was again disturbed, and a secession of the dissentient party took place; which led to the formation of what is called the Methodist Protestant Church, among the ministry of which there have been and are many excellent and able men.

common discipline. But now, instead of submitting to the decision of his brethren, he yielded still more to the temptation of sacrificing the peace of the Church to the gratification of his own will in working out his projects of "reform." So the quiet, saving labours of the pastor were superseded by the wild work of the incendiary. The year was one of trouble. Evil words abounded, and the love of many waxed cold. Societies were decimated or dissolved, and a secession, with O'Kelly at its head, became, under the name of "the Republican Methodist Church," the trophy, though an ephemeral one, of his success. All these things greatly depressed Dr. Coke. In his anxiety to obviate a danger which seemed to menace the very life of the Methodist cause, and if possible to prevent the recurrence of similar trials, it had occurred to him that this desirable object might be attained by a consolidation of the two bodies of Episcopalians then in the country, the Methodist and the Protestant Churches. Could this be done, with the full retention of the recognised status of the Methodists, and the inviolable tenure of their own privileges and usages, he thought that both Churches would derive important advantages from the union. He had revolved this problem in his own mind for some time; and, to ascertain the possibility of such a compact, before unfolding the plan to his colleague and brethren, he began to feel his way toward it by opening a correspondence with the Right Reverend Dr. White, one of the Bishops of the Protestant Church, and by subsequently meeting him and Dr. Magaw at Philadelphia. White, who appears to have been a man of excellent dispositions, and as a Churchman moderate in his ecclesiastical principles, would have been willing to concur in the overture; but the "Convention" or yearly synod of the Protestant Church, before which it was shortly discussed, were not disposed to acquiesce in the terms propounded by Coke; and the scheme, whether a good or a bad one, fell to the ground.

The proposals of Dr. Coke did not involve, on the part of

the Methodists, either the abnegation of their own ministry or the surrender of any of their peculiar usages. The validity of their ministerial orders was to be fully recognised; though Dr. Coke would not have been unwilling, for the sake of conciliation, that himself and his brethren should submit to an additional ordination.* Such an acquiescence, however, did not betray any misgiving on his part about the genuine character of the Methodist ordinations. On this point we have his own solemn declaration given in an explanatory letter to the Rev. Ezekiel Cooper, which he intended should be communicated by him to the Conference a long while after, on an occasion when these proceedings had become a subject of debate in the circles of American Methodism. In that document he makes the following straightforward statements:—

“1. I never, since I could reason on those things, considered the doctrine of the uninterrupted apostolic succession of bishops as at all valid or true.

“2. I am of our late venerable Father Mr. Wesley’s opinion, that the order of bishops and presbyters is one and the same.

“3. I believe that the episcopal form of church-government is the best in the world, when the episcopal power is under due regulations and responsibility.

“4. I believe that it is well to follow the example of the primitive church as exemplified in the word of God, by setting apart persons for great ministerial purposes by the imposition of hands; but especially those who are appointed for offices of the first rank in the church.

“From all I have advanced, you may easily perceive, my dear brethren, that I do not consider the imposition of hands, on the one hand, as essentially necessary for any office in the

* “Our ordained ministers *will not, ought not* to give up their right of administering the Sacraments.....Yet I don’t think that the generality of them, perhaps none of them, would refuse to submit to a re-ordination, if other hindrances were removed out of the way.”—Letter to Bishop White, April 24th, 1791.

church ; nor do I, on the other hand, think that the repetition of the imposition of hands for the same office, when important circumstances require it, is at all improper.

“ If it be granted that my plan of union with the old Episcopal Church was desirable, (which now I think was not so, though I most sincerely believed it to be so at that time,) then, if the plan could not have been accomplished without a repetition of the imposition of hands for the same office, I did believe, and do now believe, and have no doubt, that that repetition would have been perfectly justifiable for the enlargement of the field of action, &c., and would not by any means have invalidated the former consecration, or imposition of hands.

“ Therefore I have no doubt but my consecration of Bishop Asbury was perfectly valid, and would have been so even had he been re-consecrated.

“ I never did apply to the General Convention, or any other Convention, for re-consecration. I never intended that either Bishop Asbury or myself should give up our episcopal office, if the junction were to take place ; but I should have had no scruple then, nor should I now, if the junction were desirable, to have submitted to, or to submit to, a re-imposition of hands, in order to accomplish a great object. But I do say again, I do not now believe such a junction desirable.”

He makes a similar declaration in a letter to Asbury himself, in which he states to him his motives in having made the overture to Bishop White, believing as he then did that the measure, if carried into effect, “ would very much enlarge our field of action, and that myriads would, in consequence of it, attend our ministry, who were then much prejudiced against us.” He explains that the steps he then took were only to ascertain the practicability of the measure. He had no idea of doing anything definitively without the concurrence of Bishop Asbury and of the General Conference ; and his correspondence with Bishop White was undertaken for the purpose of furnishing himself with the substantial elements of the plan which he intended to lay before them for their consideration. He

repeats the assurance that he never applied for re-consecration. "I never intended that either you or I should give up our episcopal ordination. My proposals secured our discipline in all points.....But I now see that the failure of my plan, which was laid down from the purest motives, was for the best." We think it due to Dr. Coke to be thus particular in explaining the true character of a transaction which has been often misrepresented.

An examination at Cokesbury College, where he found seventy students ; eight days among the Society at Philadelphia, where he revised the new edition of the Form of Discipline, with the modifications resolved upon at the late Conference ; and twelve days in New-York, employed, among other engagements, in preparing and publishing by request a discourse on "The Witness of the Spirit to the Believer's Adoption,"—filled up the remaining term of this visit to America. At New-York the Doctor met with another of those interventions of Divine Providence in preserving him from destruction, which he so thankfully registers. "I went to the wharf to look out for a vessel to carry me to the West Indies, and in ascending the side of a brig my foot slipped. I alighted on something at the edge of the water which supported me, and, with the assistance of those who were near, was raised on board. But when I looked back on the situation in which I had been but a few moments before, it was most awful. A pole had been tied to the side of the brig, to prevent it from being damaged by striking against the wharf. This pole received me in my fall, otherwise in a second or two I must have been crushed between the brig and the wharf. Six times have I been in the very jaws of death upon or near the water, and yet am still preserved, a monument of mercy."

He sailed from New-York on the 12th of December, in a vessel bound for St. Eustatius. The ship was uncomfortable, from the unusually dirty habits of the crew ; and the Doctor's situation was what he terms "exceedingly nasty : " but, by the force of custom, he says, he found himself able to become a

contented Hottentot. The presiding elder of the Methodist Societies in Nova-Scotia and New-Brunswick, Mr. Black, was his fellow-voyager, "and a great consolation" to him: "but," he adds, "what was infinitely more, the consolations of God superabounded. Several times I felt such extraordinary assurances of the love of God, and His care of me, as enabled me to rejoice and triumph in Him as my blessed Asylum,* and my only Home. At the same time I saw and felt such infinite defects in myself, such want of entire purity, and such a sweet sorrowing before God, as far exceeded anything of the kind I had ever experienced. Filthy as the place was, the captain, supercargo, mate, and a passenger going to Santa-Cruz were very good-natured, and hardly ever swore. Besides, I had my papers, pen, and ink, and was able to collect a large quantity of materials for the Magazine."

At Eustatius nothing had occurred in the way of improvement. The persecuting spirit was still rife, and the little Society almost wasted away. The Doctor waited on the governor, but was received "with the usual acrimony." Among the instances of oppression which came to his notice, he mentions the case of two Negro women who had been publicly flogged for being present at a Methodist prayer-meeting. "While under the severe lashes of the common executioner, and great furrows were made in their bleeding backs, they triumphantly told the multitude that they preferred their torments above all the gold and silver in the world. In short, they gave such proofs of the power of religion, of patient suffering and victorious faith, that some principal gentlemen who were present acknowledged it was a thousand pities they should suffer at all. But nothing could move the governor."

Touching at St. Christopher's, Nevis, and Dominica, he next repaired to St. Vincent's, having learned that the Society

* Philo Judæus (*De Confus. Ling.*) has a sublime passage in which he speaks of the Almighty in the same terms.

there too had for some time been exposed to persecution, and that Mr. Lumb the missionary was even then a prisoner in the common jail. He found him incarcerated as a felon. The sentinel on guard had orders to admit no coloured person to see him. White people were occasionally admitted, who took care to supply his wants. His only crime was having preached the Gospel. An Act of the legislature had made it a punishable offence in any person not the rector of a parish to preach without a license, and that such license should not be granted to any one who had not previously resided on the island twelve months; a provision which struck at once at the Methodist plan of itinerancy. Nevertheless Mr. Lumb had proceeded the very Sunday following to exercise his ministry in the chapel, and thereby "broke the law." The penalty was put in force, and before the next Sunday he was in prison.

Referring to this infamous law, the Doctor places it on a par for cruelty with the edicts of the pagan emperors of Rome. "They first gently punished, and then proceeded from step to step, till they concluded with death. And here, for the first offence the punishment is a fine of 'ten Johannes,' or imprisonment for not more than ninety days nor less than thirty. For the second, such corporal punishment as the court shall think proper to inflict, followed by banishment. And lastly, on return from banishment, DEATH. How unparalleled a law in these modern times, and under a government called Protestant, and which boasts of the liberty of its subjects!"

Up to this time the good work had greatly prospered. A thousand Negroes had been discipled to Jesus Christ, and multitudes more brought under the Gospel. So much the deeper were the Doctor's regrets at the obstructions now thrown in the way; and the stronger his resolve, on his return to Europe, to lay the case of St. Vincent's under the consideration of the British government, and that of Eustatius before the States-General of Holland.

Meanwhile he continued his visitation of the islands; stationed a preacher, Mr. Abraham Bishop, at Grenada, and transacted much official business at Tortola, Nevis, and St. Kitt's; and on the 8th of February arrived in Antigua, where he held a Conference with the preachers of the Windward Islands, which continued for five days. From their Minutes it appears that the preachers now mustered twelve in the islands, and the members, white and coloured, amounted to 6,570. Most of them were Negroes, in whom a true reformation in the inward and outward life was making itself apparent. "They have been brought out of heathenish darkness more or less to a knowledge of the truth and of themselves. They have left, so far as we can find, all their outward sins, even polygamy itself; and a considerable part of them give so clear and rational an account of their conversion, and of the influence of religion upon their hearts and lives, as is exceedingly animating and encouraging to their pastors."

On the 15th of February he embarked for Barbadoes, with Messrs. Graham and Pearce. They called again at St. Vincent's, but found that the cloud of persecution gave no signs as yet of being lifted. The Doctor passed from this island with strong emotions. "O God, upon my bended knees I pray Thee to remove the iron hand which rests upon Thy little flock. Can it be consistent with Thy holy attributes that these should perish through the malignity of Thine enemies? 'That be far from Thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from Thee. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?'"

In the course of his peregrinations in Barbadoes, he fell in with an old Oxonian fellow-student. "I had received intelligence that Mr. Henry, a gentleman of property, had made frequent inquiries about my name, person, &c.; adding, 'He certainly is my old friend Coke with whom I was so intimate at Oxford.' I made him a visit: we at once recognised each

other, and embraced with all that warmth with which juvenile friendships inspire the breast. I spent great part of two days with him, repeating old adventures, and endeavouring to mix with them useful observations. His house and estate have been opened to the missionaries, and I doubt not he will be a real friend to them." The Doctor met with much kindness also from some others of the gentry who had been brought under the influence of the Gospel. "They seem to breathe the spirit of the English Methodists, and made me feel myself perfectly at home."

Among the fruits of Dr. Coke's ministry in Barbadoes, we may here mention the conversion of a gentleman who afterwards became an ornament to the Methodist ministry in England, and whose son is now spending his useful life in the same holy calling: I refer to the late Rev. Samuel Woolmer.*

March the 22d he sailed in the "Duke of Cumberland" packet from Barbadoes for Jamaica. A French count, an English officer, and himself were the passengers. The Frenchman, who had been a member of the States-General and of the first National Assembly at home, was now an emigrant, and, having lost his all in France, was come to look after some property he had in St. Domingo. He was full of grief for his murdered king, and haunted by continual fears of being taken on the voyage by some French privateer.

At Jamaica the Doctor, in preaching here and there, had some exciting times. In the town of Falmouth, where he had been entreated to preach, he was informed that there never had been a sermon preached since the town was built, though there was a regular parochial clergyman with a handsome stipend, whose only employment was to perform the Prayer-Book offices of matrimony, baptism, and the burial of the dead.

"A little before preaching I returned from the ship, and at the time appointed found a considerable congregation in the

* See Note 20.

Assembly-room, notice having been sent from house to house. I preached on the New Birth, from John iii. 3, and was led to speak in a closer and severer manner than I am accustomed to do in the opening of new places. For twenty minutes a deep silence reigned throughout the audience ; when the very captain who had in the first instance so importunately entreated me to preach, broke out in the following words :— ‘ Sir, if what you say be true, we must all be damned. I don’t like your doctrine at all.’ The bucks and bloods instantly took the hint, and from that time there was nothing but confusion. However, I elevated my voice, and continued my discourse for about twenty minutes longer, in the midst of noise and distraction. Several ladies who sat opposite to me seemed perfectly attentive during the whole of the service. One of them, as I was afterward informed, who was the first lady in the town, addressed herself, after I had retired, to a young gentleman who had been one of the rioters : ‘ Till this I always considered you a decent, virtuous young man ; but I now find you are a vagabond, and I forbid you ever to darken my door again.’ ”

The Doctor passed the night on board a ship in the harbour, and next day commenced a journey across the island, which brought him, after a ride of two days, to Kingston, where, after some hours’ intercourse with the Society, he embarked for England. By waiting for a convoy he might have had a passage gratis in the vessel of a friend who had made him the offer ; but his engagements at home obliged him to seize the earliest opportunity by the packet in which he now sailed. At one period of the voyage the want of such a protection as the convoy became rather painfully apparent. War having been declared between England and France, the cruisers of the latter power excited some fears on board the packet, as they approached the English Channel. On the 4th of June the man at the mast-head gave notice of a sail in view. The captain mounted, and, after a reconnoitre with his glass, told the people on deck that, to the best of his judgment, the vessel

was a French privateer. She was now seen to be coming down upon them with a press of canvas. As the packet would be no match for such an opponent, their only safety could be found in superior speed. A chase commenced, in which each vessel was on the utmost stretch for four-and-twenty hours. The Frenchman gained on them apace, and dismal forebodings of capture came stronger and darker. Then cried they to the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses. A whole English fleet suddenly hove in sight. It was Lord Hood, with eleven sail of the line, on their way to the Mediterranean. "Joyfully," says the Doctor, "did we sail into the midst of our friends, while the privateer made off towards the coast of France. Thus did Providence deliver us. Then praise the Lord, O my soul. 'While I live, will I praise Him; yea, as long as I have any being, will I sing praises to my God.'"

CHAPTER XVI.

FIFTH INTERVAL IN ENGLAND AND HOLLAND.

THE first concern that rested upon Dr. Coke's mind, when once more in England, was to obtain the intervention of government in protecting the missionaries from the tyranny to which they were exposed from some of the West-Indian magistrates. From the irreligious caprices of these men, the beneficent work which had been so happily begun among the Negroes was liable, as he had found, to continual obstructions; and one faithful servant of Christ he had left imprisoned by them as a common felon. Resolving to take the most effectual means of relief, he addressed a memorial to the king in council, and waited himself on several members of the government. His statements were taken into fair consideration, and a first reply made, that, as the government, in addition to his own *ex-parte* allegations, wished to ascertain the opinion of influential persons in the islands themselves, on the principles and conduct of the missionaries, the secretary of state for the colonies would institute inquiries in the proper quarters to elicit an impartial testimony on the subject. Letters were accordingly issued to the governors of the several islands, directing such an investigation. It was made, and with an issue highly honourable to the impartiality of the governors, the integrity of the missionaries, and the justice and kindness of the home-government; for when, in the month of August, Dr. Coke, with a committee of the London preachers, waited on Mr. Dundas to know the result, they were informed by that minister that his Majesty in council had been pleased to disannul the Act of the Assembly in

St. Vincent's, and that the royal pleasure to that effect would be notified by the first packet.

Thus it is that the persecutor of religion often advances the cause he had intended to repress. Divine Providence knows how to make the malignity of wicked men subserve its own designs of mercy; for, among the promoters of the Methodist missions in the West Indies, none had rendered them a more effectual service than those Neros in miniature who had imprisoned good Matthew Lumb.

The English Conference, which was held this year in Leeds, and at which Dr. Coke officiated as secretary, encountered a momentous question which for several years had increasingly agitated the Connexion. Methodism, by an innate development, was taking more and more the form and character of an organic Church. The people, converted and christianized by the grace of God, desired, as became them, the full enjoyment of all Christian ordinances, to enable them to walk in the way of His commandments without blame. A multitude of them had never held communion with the Church of England, but, gathered out of the world, had learned to regard the preachers who had been the instruments of their introduction into the Christian life, as their true and legitimate pastors; and to them they wished to bring their children for holy baptism, and from their hands to receive the symbols of redemption. On the other hand, many of the Methodist families who had been nurtured in the Church felt a great disinclination to have what they called Mr. Wesley's "old plan" innovated upon by such an arrangement. Among this latter party, the trustees of some of the principal chapels took a decisive stand. It was manifest, too, that the desire of these gentlemen was not only to keep Methodism to what they held to be its original and best form, as a subsidiary to the Church, and (though repudiated and opposed by it) steadfast in its unwelcome and repelled adherence to it; but also that they, the trustees, should exercise a lay dictatorship over the preachers. The restlessness which these conflicting sentiments produced

in the Connexion was exerting a disastrous influence on its peace and prosperity, and urged itself each year more gravely on the attention of the Conference. In their last session it had been agreed, after much discussion, that another year should be allowed to elapse in pursuing the old way, and in prayerfully waiting for the dictate of Providence. The authority of the preachers to administer the sacraments was taken for granted: the only question was the expediency of exercising their right, and thus meeting the wishes of many thousands of their people at the time then present. The year had so passed, and the desire of the Societies was stronger than ever; and it had become apparent that, unless their Christian wishes were gratified, the Connexion would be broken up. "I am well satisfied," said Mr. Pawson, "that except liberty is given to the Societies who wish to have the sacrament, we shall have a division both among the preachers and the people." Adam Clarke spoke the mind of many of his brethren, as well as his own, in declaring that he was resolved to have liberty of conscience, or go to the ends of the earth for it; while others confessed themselves no longer able to resist the appeal of the people, and willing to take all consequences. On the other side, some ministers, with Mr. Benson at their head, advocated the *status quo*, and urged the necessity of adhering to the primitive usage. On both sides the subject was discussed with earnestness and candour; and by a majority of thirty-eight the issue was, that in those places where the members were unanimous in their desire for the administration of the Lord's Supper at the hands of their own ministers, it should be granted. With reference to the clerical qualification of the ministrants, it was laid down that the being solemnly received as ministers into full connexion with the Conference, and appointed by them so to administer, should be considered in itself as an act of ordination.

These decisions were made known to the Societies in a pastoral letter from the Conference, in which they describe

the difficulty of having been placed between two contending parties, and affirm their anxiety to maintain the unity of the body in removing as far as possible the cause of contention, by supplying those Societies who could not, or would not, have them elsewhere, with the holy ordinances. They then aver that this measure had been forced upon them by the people; and that the privilege now granted to some need not alter the general character of the body, the members of which were exhorted to continue, as usual, in connexion with the Church of England.*

In these solemn deliberations Dr. Coke took an earnest part. He fully coincided with the concessions decided on; or, rather, he was one of the most decided advocates for them. It was his conviction, strengthened by what from time to time he had witnessed in America, that unless some well-regulated union with the Church of England could be formed, the Methodist people would be better themselves, and would do more good to the world, by becoming a Church made perfect as such, and thoroughly furnished unto every good word and work. He saw that the measures now adopted would have a tendency towards this consummation, and rejoiced in a clearer hope of the day when the Methodist Societies throughout the earth would acquire a recognised identity with the Church

* "You may clearly see from hence, dear brethren, that it is the people who have forced us into this further deviation from our union with the Church of England. Still we wish to be united with it as a body at large. The Societies which answer the description mentioned above need but have a small influence on the whole Connexion. We cannot, however, we will not, part with any of our dear flock on account of unessential points. For we love you all, and are the servants of you all for Jesus' sake. But we entreat our Societies at large (the few exempt cases excepted) to continue as usual in connexion with the Church of England; and we shall with great cheerfulness labour among them according to that simple original plan of Methodism established and left to us by our venerable friend. We must observe to you, in conclusion, that we feel the most unfeigned loyalty to the king, and a sincere attachment to the constitution. We reverence the government, are conscious of the many blessings we enjoy under our gracious sovereign, and are thankful to God for them; and do earnestly recommend the same principles and spirit to you."

universal, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone; a holy temple, the habitation of God.*

In one respect, and in one only, he regretted, when the Conference was over, that he had been led to make so open a demonstration on the subject; since, on resuming his itinerancies, in begging for the missions, he found that some of his best subscribers in past years had been among the advocates of the "old plan," and now gave him too significant tokens of the disapproval with which they regarded the innovations he had done so much to promote. He saw, indeed, that the peculiar work assigned him by Providence would impose on him in future the necessity of observing a neutrality on these agitated questions, rather than to assume the business of a partisan, with the certainty of giving offence to some, and thereby endangering or crippling the success of those great enterprises of mercy to the world, in which he was anxious that the whole Methodist body, whether Churchmen or Dissenters, should be alike engaged. It was to this glorious work he had consecrated his existence upon earth, and he counted all things but loss that he might promote it to the utmost.

But though the inevitable duties which crowded upon him as a minister, as the secretary of the Conference at home, and the general superintendent of and provider for the missions abroad, were enough to make his daily life one incessant toil, the Doctor found time, nevertheless, for the prosecution of his literary undertaking in the Commentary; at which, together with the dispatch of a vast correspondence, he worked in the silent hours of the night. The resolution, virtue, and wondrous self-denial of these sustained efforts strike us with still greater effect by the recollection of his migratory manner of life. Sometimes for weeks he was barely two days together in the same place, but in journeyings often, on horseback, or in all sorts of vehicles, he went everywhere, not only in the daytime,

* See note 21.

preaching the word, and in his conversation, ministry, and example diffusing the fragrance of the name of Jesus Christ, but, while men slept, employing many a night-hour in writings, which, after he should cease to speak, would render him to unborn generations a witness of the Saviour's truth and grace.

Having, as related, made an appeal to the English government on behalf of the persecuted mission-cause in St. Vincent's, with such gratifying success, Dr. Coke was not without hope that something equally beneficial might be done for the island of St. Eustatius, by bringing the case before the attention of the supreme authorities in Holland. In January (1794) he therefore resolved to try the experiment in person; and, crossing in wintry weather to the Low Countries, repaired at once to the Hague. Among the letters of introduction with which he was furnished, one obtained for him the pleasure of forming an acquaintance with Dr. Maclaine, the translator of Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, then residing as an English chaplain at the Hague. But neither from him, nor from the other gentlemen to whom he stated his business, could he derive much hope of obtaining the object of his wishes, or any assistance, except that of opening his way for an audience with the hereditary stadtholder, William the Fifth. That high personage, afterwards King of the Netherlands, gave him a gracious interview, and promised to take his memorial into consideration. The Doctor could perceive, however, in the dubious tone of his Highness, that he would do wisely to prepare himself for a disappointment. The moral and political genius of the Dutch government was far different in its temperature from the genial atmosphere which surrounded the British throne; and, had it been equally liberal, yet he, an alien, was asking the liberty to intermeddle with the principles and conduct of a community who were subjects of another power, and by the agents of a foreign sect unknown to the government, or known only, it may be, by vague and sinister reports which set it in a suspicious aspect.

All these considerations, which did not fail to occur to him, left him barely with the consolation of knowing that he had done what he could.

After some delay he received an intimation that it would be necessary for him to furnish the government with testimonials from adequate authorities in England, which would give them suitable guarantees of the worth and respectability of the religious body whom Dr. Coke represented, and in behalf of whose agents he was then petitioning for an entrance to the colony. To a requirement so reasonable Dr. Coke immediately responded, by causing an application to be made through some of the preachers in London to an authority which he knew would have the greatest weight with the high mightinesses of Holland, his Britannic majesty's secretary of state; who, in a communication to the minister at the Hague, gave the following kind and just testimonial:—

“WHITEHALL, *February 2d*, 1794.

“SIR,

“THE united Society of Methodists, late in connexion with the Rev. John Wesley, have represented to me that in some communications with the government of the United Provinces they were desirous of being furnished with my sentiments in respect to them.

“I have lately had some communications with this Society, who are members of the Church of England; and it is with great satisfaction I can bear testimony to the loyalty of their principles and conduct. And if I may form an opinion of their future demeanour by their past behaviour, I can well assure myself that they will in no instance deviate from that rectitude and obedience to the laws which have hitherto marked the character of this Society.

“I am, Sir,

“Your most obedient humble servant,

“HENRY DUNDAS.

“HON. WM. ELLIOT.”

Notwithstanding these expressive assurances of the consideration with which the Methodist body was regarded by the English government, they failed to induce that of Holland so far to relax the stringency of its colonial regimen as to tolerate the operation of a foreign agency among the Negro people of St. Eustatius; and, after lingering some weeks longer, with the fallacious hope of a favourable issue to his negotiations, Dr. Coke was at length under the necessity of returning to England with such faint expectations as may be gathered from a letter addressed by him to Dr. Maclaine when on the eve of embarking:—

“HELVOETSLUYS, *March 22d*, 1794.

“MY VERY DEAR SIR,

“I sit down for the satisfaction of my own mind to write you a few lines, before I finally take my leave of this country. Indeed, I should think twenty visits nothing either in respect to time or expense, if I might thereby succeed in promoting the enlargement of the Redeemer’s kingdom. Nor do I think the directors of the Dutch West-India Company will, in the only instance in which they can serve the Redeemer, prevent the enlargement of His kingdom by prohibiting others from embarking in so good and humane a cause.

“I do assure you, my dear sir, it affords me much pleasure, and saves me from much pain which suspense would otherwise occasion, that the cause is now, under God, committed into your hands. Though my acquaintance with you has been but short, yet I have observed enough to see clearly that I have in you one on whom I can rely with an unshaken confidence. And, as our respective situations in life prevent our enjoying much personal intercourse here below, it gives me delight to think that we shall have one grand ministerial labour, in which we may in our respective lines of influence unite; namely, in the conversion of the Negroes throughout the empire of the seven United Provinces.

“I intend to take the liberty (after the consent is obtained)

of sending you an account of the progress of this work.... This will serve to stir up our minds to the kindest remembrance of each other, till we meet to spend an eternity in our Father's kingdom. And as sometimes civil governors are more extensively useful in the guidance of large colonial concerns in distant parts than they can be even at home, so we may be more honoured instruments of glorifying God by collecting a large flock for Christ out of this naughty world in a distant country than we may be in our more confined circles at home.

"There is nothing, I am persuaded, has so great a tendency to accomplish this as the sending out faithful missionaries who breathe the true apostolic spirit; who count not their lives dear to themselves, so they may win souls. Each of their names is Legion. Such we have among us, who want not to serve a party, but, through Almighty grace, desire only to be so employed in any part of the world, at home or abroad, as to bring to God as many souls as possible.

"The packet is just going to sail. I intended to fill my paper. God bless you. When you remember your friends before the gracious throne, sometimes, at least, remember me. I shall not forget you in my feeble petitions. Once more, adieu.

"Dear Sir, your very much obliged

"And faithful friend and brother,

"T. COKE.*

"*The Rev. Dr. Maclaine, Hague.*"

During his sojourn in the Low Countries Dr. Coke enjoyed a much-needed and beneficial relaxation from his ordinary labours; and in the society of learned men, and with access to large libraries, he gathered in some rich accessions to his

* Ten years after, Providence opened the door for a new attempt at St. Eustatius. At the present time a missionary stately labours in the island, with a Society of nearly three hundred members.

store of materials for the Commentary. From his friend Maclaine he obtained six volumes of notes on the Bible in the French language, which that gentleman's father-in-law had spent many years in collecting; and from these the Doctor subsequently made large selections for his work.

He was glad to be in England again. Passing thither, he seemed to emerge from a stormy vortex to a region of tranquillity. Events on the Continent were daily more and more portentous. In Holland itself there was already heard the tramp of those terrible armies whose tri-coloured flag soon threw its bloody gleam over their woe-struck cities; and throughout the European lands men's hearts were failing them with fear, in looking for the things that were coming on the earth. So much the more sighed the good for the better time when such designs as those for which Coke lived and died will receive their great consummation,—the setting up of the kingdom whose rule is one of holiness and love, the bringing in of that better hope by which all men shall draw nigh unto God; when, the howling wilderness transformed into an Eden, and the desert made to blossom as the rose, the families of the earth will dwell securely under the vine and under the fig-tree, the wolf also with the lamb, and the leopard with the kid.

“The fiend of hate shall hide his head,
Abash'd, with all his spectre train;
And war, so long with carnage red,
Shall dye no more the blushing plain:
Fair justice will again rejoice,
As, pale revenge, thy triumphs cease;
And innocence attune her voice
To lull the universe to peace.”

CHAPTER XVII.

AFRICA, AND THE SIXTH VOYAGE OUT.

THE African continent, from which the veil of mystery has been in our times so far uplifted, was in those days a region almost unexplored. Its very coasts were rarely pressed by the foot of the European, except for purposes of villany and crime. Often, since the apostolic spirit had fallen on Dr. Coke, had his heart beat with strong desire to visit that undisclosed world himself, or to be the instrument of sending into its deepest recesses the light of the Gospel, and of planting on the banks of its "rivers unknown to song" the banner of the Cross.

In 1795 a project was suggested to him, to attempt the formation of a species of missionary colony among the Felatahs, or Foulahs, in the country beyond Sierra-Leone. This race of Africans was described to him as being of a higher type of intellect, and with nearer approaches to civilization, than the Kaffirs, Hottentots, and other tribes. The plan which he revolved was that of organizing an emigrant community of Christian mechanics and husbandmen, who would both instruct the sable people among whom they settled in the arts of civilized life, and endeavour to bring them under the influence of Christianity. The Doctor, in making this plan known to some eminent persons in London, was promised all the secular patronage necessary to the experiment; and, in his numerous journeys in the provinces, he made it his business to look out for suitable persons, who would be likely to answer the description of character he had in his mind, to bring into action in fulfilling it.

By the middle of February in the following year all the preparatory arrangements had been completed; and the adventurers embarked at Portsmouth for Sierra-Leone. The governor of that colony happened to be a passenger. He showed a hearty interest in their designs, and offered them employment at Sierra-Leone till they should be seasoned to the climate, and more fully ready to go into the interior.

Yet this good design, which appears to be one of the first instances in the history of nations in which the civilization and salvation of the aboriginal inhabitants was the object in settling a colony,—this project, which looked so hopeful, was a failure. And, as I have nothing favourable to report, I forbear to occupy my too scanty pages with fruitless details. Suffice it to say, that the Doctor had not been happy in his choice of persons to carry his plans into effect. Even before the voyage was over, the party had fallen out among themselves; and, while residing in the colony, the conduct of many of them was so bad as to render it evident that, were they permitted to establish themselves among the natives, they would do them greater harm than good. Thus far the enterprise had no other result than the sacrifice of money and the shipwreck of hope. Deeply mortified at his failure, but resolved to watch still for the benefit of Africa, and to seize the first opportunity of attempting a plan more effective, the Doctor turned his regards anew towards those myriads of Africa's degraded children who were toiling in hopeless captivity in the Western Isles. It was to him a triumphal joy that there he beheld substantial returns which showed that his labour had not been in vain in the Lord. He knew, too, how probable it was that the conversion of the Negro slaves might, in the order of Providence, hereafter lead to the more extensive evangelization of the African continent; and, to forward among the living a work which would not only lead to their own salvation, but be germinant of good to the generations to come, he was resolved, whatever fresh undertakings he might

be induced to attempt, never to relax his efforts for that oppressed and desolate race.

In the summer of 1795 Dr. Coke had spent, as usual, some time in Ireland. While at Armagh, he was attacked by a fever which confined him to his bed for eleven days. In his delirium he was still at work. He fancied that a large congregation was waiting for a preacher in an adjoining grove. The physician, as it seemed to him, was standing at his side, on which he addressed him:—"Doctor, I am not afraid to die; therefore I conjure you to tell me faithfully my real situation." The physician seemed to answer, "You have not many hours to live, sir; perhaps, not one." "Then," said Coke, "do me the favour of going down to the congregation, and send up six strong young men of our Society, who may carry me down to the people in my bed, that I may preach for an hour and die; and let some boards be formed into an inclined plane on which my bed may be laid." Everything, as he imagined, was done accordingly. The frame of wood was prepared, the six young men came up, carried him, bed and all, down to the grove, and placed him on the wooden frame; and he preached for an hour, and died. He now thought that, as his spirit was ascending to heaven, he paused and looked down to see how things would go on in the congregation. The physician had been sent for, and, feeling the pulse and temples of the corpse, pronounced it dead. A solemn awe was resting on the faces of the silent people.—Such was the dream of the sick evangelist, under the influence of "the ruling passion strong in death." He was told afterwards, that at the time he was heard to repeat again and again the verse of the hymn,—

"Happy, if with my latest breath
I may but gasp His name;
Preach Him to all, and cry in death,
'Behold, behold the Lamb!'"

He became convalescent just in time for the Conference. "I have been confined to my bed" (he tells the Rev. George

Holder) “near a fortnight with a fever; but I bless God I am much better, and hope to take the field again in a short time. It is on this account I have been obliged to employ a secretary; otherwise I should have written to you with my own hand. I am wonderfully recovered. Six days ago I was at death’s door, and now can in some good measure go through the fatigue of the Conference. The preachers who saw me in my illness are astonished at the goodness of God. O my brother, why do you talk of a division? I would not have a hand in it for ten thousand worlds. It was not the old or the new plan which influenced me to take Mr. Moore’s part: it was the trustees having exercised the power *alone* of expelling a preacher.* If you are for God, come to the Conference determined to promote peace. This and the last year have been the best in the annals of Methodism for the conversion of souls. What else is worth thinking of? Give me, and the other lovers of peace on both sides, your hand and your heart, and God will bless you with the blessings of a peacemaker. My love to Mrs. Holder, your colleagues, and Mr. and Mrs. Clarke.”

The period had now come round when Dr. Coke would be expected again among the preachers in America; and on the 6th of August, 1796, he embarked at Gravesend on board the “Friendship” for Baltimore. This time he was accompanied by a French gentleman, M. Pontavice. In addition to the captain of the ship, there was another, the master of some vessel which had been wrecked. These, with one more passenger, formed the company in the cabin. The voyage was one of the most disagreeable the Doctor ever made. Of scanty fare and bad accommodation he does not in his journal complain, (though he had paid eighty guineas for the passage of himself and friend,)—but of the extremely bad conduct of the two captains, whose obscenity, blasphemy, and base

* The trustees of Broadmead chapel, Bristol, had excluded Mr. Moore from officiating in that edifice, to prevent his administering the sacrament there.—Vide Life of the Rev. Henry Moore, by Mrs. Richard Smith, p. 128.

behaviour show them to have been a pair of reprobates. "The various means they employed to make my voyage painful are not easily to be described. Common delicacy, indeed, would prevent me from relating their conduct. But there was one happy circumstance,—the weather was very fair, and they generally spent their mornings on deck; so that M. Pontavice and myself read over Ostervald's Notes on the Old Testament, and other French books. I also spent about half my time in preparing some publications for the press; and by means of these sweet exercises the voyage was rendered in some measure supportable. However, the cruel usage I received brought on a fit of illness, which confined me to my bed three days. During this time the Lord did truly speak to my heart. I received such instructions and blessings from Him as I shall never forget. O, how was I weaned from the world and all its follies! and not only so, but became willing to be anything or nothing, as the Lord pleased; to be employed or laid aside, as He judged proper. This was a spirit I was but little acquainted with before. I had sincerely loved God for many years, and had no ambition but to be the instrument, immediately or remotely, of converting millions to Him. I had long been willing to die, but not to be inactive while I lived. But now, through the grace of God, I could say, 'Thy will be done.' At the same time I lost, I hope, none of my zeal. I still equally long for the conversion of souls, but find myself entirely resigned in respect to the instruments He uses. I am sensible I wanted all that I have suffered. From that time I have hardly known which to thank God for most,—His open or disguised blessings, prosperity or adversity."

I transcribe these sentences in Dr. Coke's own words, as they will be most acceptable to the Christian reader so given. We wish to show the man as he really was; and these disclosures reveal the experience of a mind exercised in the ways of God.

When they had been six weeks out, they fell in, one calm

morning, with a wrecked vessel. She proved to be a ship bound for London from Honduras Bay. About five or six days before, in a storm, the skirts of which had reached them, she was overset, and the crew obliged to cut away the masts to right her. Laden with mahogany and logwood, the dismantled hull soon filled with water. The company, consisting of the captain, mate, seven men, a woman, and a boy, were not only in danger of foundering altogether, but of perishing from hunger; for the provisions which they had succeeded in collecting on deck had been borne off by the great waves, which washed away the poor female also, who, it appeared, was on her way, after twenty years' absence, to visit her relatives in England once more before she died. Around the wreck a multitude of hungry fish were waiting for their prey. In this dismal condition they had passed five days, with no food but some leather which they had cut off from the covering of the skylight, and no drink but sea-water or worse. The captain of the "Friendship," bad as he was, had compassion enough to give them shelter. Their looks were appalling. Their captain had behaved like a hero, and his face, Coke says, was serenity itself; and one of the crew, a Negro, proved to be a Methodist, a leader and local preacher. Who knows but his prayers had prevailed for them? The English captain lashed the "Friendship" to the wreck, and got cannon, cordage, sails, and blocks out of her to a large amount.

On the 3d of October they saw the American land, but were driven off by adverse winds for five days. "This," says the Doctor, "was no inconsiderable trial to me in the dreadful situation in which I was; for the ill usage I received from the two captains daily grew worse and worse. But all was good for me. I confess I had sometimes thought of exposing these cruel men in Baltimore; but, whenever I indulged in these thoughts, I perceived something like resentment rising in my breast, which, indulged, might have ended in revenge. At last I resolved not to move, or even to speak, in this business

contrary to that Gospel which says, 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you;' and, when my whole soul was fully made up to proceed in this spirit, I felt a tranquillity difficult to describe. Indeed, I believe their design was to bring on a violent fever, or, if they could, to drive me to insanity; that by any means they might prevent my future service in a cause which they so perfectly hated. But I can say that during the whole of the voyage I dropped not from my mouth to any one of them a word which was harsh, or, as far as I can judge, inconsistent with the spirit of love. For this I give all the glory to the grace of God."

Yes; that is the more apparent from the recollection of the Doctor's natural temperament.* Southey, in one of his references to him, in the biography of Mr. Wesley, says that "his Welsh blood was soon up." He came of a race distinguished, like the Scotch, by the "*perfervidum ingenium*." His feelings were soon excited, but the wand of religion could lay them as soon under control.

"He carried anger as the flint bears fire,
Which, when enforced, shows a hasty spark,
And straight grows cold again."

Yet the trial of temper which this voyage brought upon him shows that the mastery of his own spirit had become more decisive. He who in like circumstances can habitually bridle temper and tongue, is becoming what St. James styles "a perfect man."

When they cast anchor in Chesapeake Bay, a pilot-boat came up, in which Dr. Coke might have got to Baltimore in two days; but the captain would not suffer him to take a single article with him. He was therefore obliged to stay, afraid to leave his luggage, among which were manuscripts and papers on which he set much value, at their mercy. The

* "*Irasci facilis, tamen ut placabilis esset.*"

next day came, and their abuse, blasphemy, and obscenity still continued. "The wind was getting contrary, and likely to be so. I knew that ships are sometimes detained for a fortnight or three weeks in the Chesapeake before they can get up to Baltimore; and it was possible I should be too late for the General Conference. Seldom did I pray more earnestly than for the appearance of some boat which might carry me to land, and deliver me from the floating hell in which I was imprisoned; when, behold, two boats appeared in sight. I requested the captain, in the gentlest manner I could, to hail them. 'No,' said he, 'you might have gone yesterday in the pilot-boat: it would be using the pilot ill to let you go by any other.' I again sat down and prayed; after which I once more addressed him, and told him that, as he objected to hail the boats on account of the loss which the pilot would suffer, I would pay his pilot the price he had demanded. On this, to my great joy, he signaled the boats, which came up. Two young men who were in the boat demanded a guinea to carry me to St. Mary's Bay, to which they were themselves going. I agreed; and after apologizing to M. Pontavice for leaving him behind, on account of the trunks and boxes, and delivering to him two letters of introduction to our friends at Baltimore, lest he should be there before me, I set off with one shirt in my great-coat pocket, full of thanks to God for my deliverance, and for the never-to-be-forgotten blessings which I received at His hands by the means of suffering. I am persuaded that this voyage was the most useful season of my life."

The captain was steadfast in his bad behaviour to the last. When passing into the boat, Dr. Coke (who had paid him eighty guineas for the voyage) asked him for a little bread and pork; when his reply was, "I have none to spare." "So," writes the Doctor, "I set off with a heart exceedingly light. Late at night we arrived in St. Mary's Bay. I lay on the hard wood till morning; yet it was a most comfortable night." The boat was a small schooner with a half-deck. "When I went on deck, I found myself in a little romantic nook of the

bay, which was perfectly land-locked. It seemed like a small lake without an entrance. The sun shone bright, the plantations in sight were numerous, and so intermixed with wood and water, that, though I have seen innumerable superior prospects, never did another, I think, so delight me."

The inhabitants round about that neighbourhood were chiefly Roman Catholics; but the Doctor was pointed to a house within sight on the hill, the residence of a Captain Chizzle, a Protestant. He walked up thither, and was received with much kind consideration.

This gentleman introduced him to another, who was going in two days to Baltimore in a sloop of which he was proprietor. He gave the Doctor an invitation to sail with him, of which, finding that horses were not to be obtained for an overland journey, he thankfully availed himself. Accordingly, the next day he went to the house of the owner of the vessel, who showed himself a man of great hospitality and refined sense. Another gentleman was there, who intended going with them. Every attention which could be wished for was paid to Dr. Coke; but he soon found that his two companions had embraced the opinions of poor Thomas Paine, a sort of oracle among the infidels of the day. A close debate ensued, on their part carried on with much delicacy and good feeling, and on Coke's part with those advantages which an intimate—and, in his own sad recollections, a too personal—acquaintance with the temptations of unbelief, finally overcome by the grace of God, could not fail to give him. At length they sailed for the Potomac; but the wind was again adverse. Dr. Coke now began to be anxious, and entreated his kind entertainers to put him ashore, whence he would make the best of his way through the country.

Near the spot where he landed stood a house, to which he immediately repaired. It was the residence of a gentleman named Armstrong, to whom he mentioned his own name, and informed him of his situation. "Sir," replied Mr. Armstrong, "though I am not a member of your Church, I have heard of

you, and have a great regard for your Society. My son-in-law, now dead, was a Methodist preacher. I have a good horse in the stable at your service ; but, if I had been obliged to take one from the plough, I would have done it for you. You must return back to Captain Chizzle's, which is about twenty-five miles from hence, and I will send a servant for the horse." Thus the interval spent, however pleasantly, with these friendly people, was, as regarded the object of his journey, so much time lost. He hereupon returned that day to the captain's, who the next morning lent him a couple of horses and a servant, to go to his brother's house, ten miles further on ; where the Doctor arrived by breakfast-time. This gentleman, a senator of Maryland, informed him that there was a sloop on their river, (the Patuxent,) which would sail immediately for Baltimore, and offered him a passage in it. Coke excused himself, as having had already too much of that kind of conveyance ; and said that, though a hundred miles from Baltimore, he would rather walk the whole way than go upon the water again. "If, then, you will stay and dine with me, sir," replied the senator, "we will consider how to send you on." He thereupon spent a few agreeable hours with him and two other intelligent friends of the family. After dinner the Doctor expressed his wish to set forward. "Sir," said Mr. Chizzle, "if you will take a bed at my house, we will to-morrow lay a plan for sending you on." Dr. Coke complied, on condition that he would promise to send him on the next morning after breakfast. "I make you that promise," he said, with a smile.

"Before tea I took a walk into the woods. He met me, returning. 'What book, sir,' said he, 'are you reading?' 'Thomas à Kempis's Christian's Pattern, sir,' I answered. 'Will you permit me, sir, to look into it?' he replied. 'If you will do me the honour of accepting it, sir,' I answered, 'you will confer a favour upon me.' 'I will, sir,' replied the senator ; 'and I promise you that both I and my family will read it through.' After breakfast, in the morning, he observed,

‘Now, sir, there are two horses ready for you. I will send you to a friend of mine, and will write in such a manner that you shall have no difficulty all the way to Baltimore. My friends will forward you on from stage to stage. But, to relieve you from all anxiety, if on this plan you find any difficulty, you may take my servant and horses to the end of your journey. Or, as there are, I know, many of your Societies at the other end of the country, my servant shall carry you to them. There is one of your friends, particularly, Mr. Child, who I believe is a preacher, and a man of established character, who lives about thirty miles hence in your direct way. If you prefer this latter plan, my servant will set you down at his house.’ I preferred the latter, and was accordingly set down in the evening at the house of brother Child.”

Honour to the memory of these hospitable men! I transcribe these artless memorials with a feeling of gratification which will be shared by the reader. The true gentleman is the same all the world over. Dr. Coke adds, that he should never forget the kindness of this one, and that he longed to see him again.

In riding through the woods, the autumnal landscapes, tinted with the variegated hues of the season, were most delightful after the monotony of his nine weeks’ noisome voyage, and tuned his heart and tongue to magnify and adore the Creator and Ruler of all. On arriving at Mr. Child’s, the Doctor found himself once more on a Methodist hearth, and most cordially at home. After some charming hours, he went on his way from one Methodist family to another. At the city of Annapolis he spent two days, and preached to a large congregation. Here he met with a preacher, in elder’s orders, who had been labouring on the other side of the Apalachian Mountains, and who, coming back in company with some fellow-travellers, having occasion to transact some affair, had diverged from the party, taking with him just a little dried venison and some bread, with the full expectation of overtaking his companions before he should want a fresh supply. The

Americans, in peopling the vast territory in Kentucky, Tennessee, and the far-western states, had passed over extensive breadths of waste forest-country, for the sake of the richer soil that lay towards the west ; so that great tracts of wilderness often stretched between the old and the new settlements. Through one of these, two hundred miles across, the travelling party I have mentioned had now to pass ; and the forlorn preacher failed to rejoin them, by taking a trail divergent from theirs. Eleven days he rode, and subsisted on small mouthfuls of his venison, till at last the little stock was gone. At the expiration of the eleventh day the horse sank beneath his rider, who was obliged to leave him behind. On he went, carrying the saddle-bags on his shoulder. Five days passed in the agonies of famine. Twice he met with a wild bear. Each time he stood face to face with the animal, which retreated before his gaze. One night, towards the close of this dreadful journey, he was lying down resting his delirious head upon his saddle, when he heard a rustling noise, and could distinguish the footsteps of a man. Fearful that it might be an Indian, he did not dare to make himself known, but lay quiet and fell asleep. On the sixteenth day he came to a plantation, scarcely able to articulate, or to swallow the food with which the compassionate housewife saved him from perishing altogether.

Dr. Coke arrived at Baltimore, after all, two days before the Conference commenced. The two deistical gentlemen with whom he had conversed at St. Mary's Bay had reached the port before him, and he was pleased to learn that they had made very kind inquiries after him.

The Conference which he had come to attend was the General one, held once in four years ; that term having elapsed since his last visit to America. He had now the pleasure of greeting his brethren in the ministry, and comparing notes once more with his old companion and colleague, Francis Asbury. That primitive bishop had spent the four years in unremitting toil carried on over a large breadth of country,

and often, as appears from his private journal, with much bodily, and sometimes mental, distress. Glancing at this diary for the few months then past, I find such passages as these :—

“Georgia. March 16th.—Rode fifteen miles to Whitevale. I was sick. The house was very open, and the wind blew powerfully. Dying! Dead! We swam our horses across Little River, and had to ride fifteen miles to get our dinners. 24th.—I had a few wealthy and, I fear, wicked people. Preached on our Lord’s weeping over Jerusalem. We had deep wading across Long Creek, and made it nearly twenty miles to ———: very kind, but no religion here. Had to ride to Curltail River, and thence to the head of Reedy River, twenty-eight or thirty miles. We got no food for man or horse till we came to D.’s. I preached to his father twenty-two years ago.

“South Carolina. 29th.—Held forth about an hour and a half on Acts iii. 26. We set out again about two o’clock, and had to ride for our dinner only twenty miles. We crossed Muddy and Lick Creeks, Little and Great Bush Rivers. These afford excellent bodies of land. April 4th.—Crossed Fair Forest, and came to J. G.’s, where I had to stop and rest. Since coming to South Carolina, I have rode through Newbury, Spartansberg, and Lawrence counties. 20th.—We rode forty miles to Indian Creek, about fifteen miles above the mouth. We had no place to dine till we arrived at father C——’s about six o’clock. If I could have regular food and sleep, I could stand the fatigue I have to go through much better; but this is impossible. To sleep four hours, and ride forty miles without food or fire, is hard; but we had water enough in the rivers and creeks. I shall have rode nearly a thousand miles on the western waters before I leave them. Ah, if I were young again! I was happy to have a comfortable night’s sleep, after a hard day’s ride. I have now a little time to refit, recollect, and write. Here forts and savages were once; now peace and improvement. 27th.—After

preaching, and meeting the Society, came away much clouded. We came off from brother C.'s about four o'clock, aiming at the Little Levels; but darkness came on, and we had to climb and blunder over the point of a mountain, in descending which my feet were so squeezed that blood was ready to gush out at the pores. I could hardly help weeping out my sorrow. At length we came to brother H.'s, where the kindness of the family was a cordial; and we went to rest, and all was well.

"New-York. August 25th.—I generally walk three or four miles a day here, pray ten or twelve times, in the congregation, families, and classes. Sleep interrupted with pain and heat. 26th.—Meeting classes, and visiting from house to house. In the evening, full. I was uncommonly assisted in preaching, and there was much weeping in the congregation. It is impossible to preach to these people till you get acquainted with them. But here I have no continuing city: next week I go hence. 28th.—Preached in the morning at the old church; in the afternoon at the new church, Heb. ii. 3; and in the evening at the old church again, Rev. iii. 2, 3;—besides meeting six classes in the course of the day. I have had extraordinary assistance.

"Maryland. October 19th.—Came to Baltimore, where about a hundred preachers were met for General Conference. I preached on 'the men of Issachar, who knew what Israel ought to do;' and again, on 'Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.' There were souls awakened and converted. We had [in the Conference] a great deal of good and judicious talk. The Conference rose on the 3d of November. What we have done is printed. Bishop Coke was cordially received as my friend and colleague, to be wholly for America, unless a way should be opened to France."

The Doctor himself speaks of this Conference as one of comfort and peace. "There was not a jarring string among us; all was unity and love. The preachers now seem to have a full view of the Scylla and Charybdis, the rocks and whirl-

pools which lie on either hand ; and are determined to avoid them. They are like the heart of one man. Surely this sweet concord must be pleasing to the Prince of Peace. It came from Him, and to Him let all the glory be ascribed." In the services "the Lord gave us signal proofs of His approval. Seldom could the congregation break up till near midnight ; and seldom were there less than half-a-dozen brought into the liberty of the children of God. On the Sunday morning, when I endeavoured to set forth the intercession of Christ, seven were justified under the sermon and the prayers that followed."

The allusion of Mr. Asbury to Dr. Coke, as his "colleague wholly for America," requires the remark, that, from the great extension of the Methodist cause on that continent, the often failing health of Bishop Asbury, and the long intervals of absence on the part of his colleague in the episcopacy, it was felt more and more that Mr. Asbury should have a surer help by the election and consecration of an assistant-bishop. While this matter was debated in the Conference, Dr. Coke was moved to terminate the discussion by offering himself unreservedly for the service of the continent, subject to certain conditions ; an offer which, being accepted by the preachers, took a more formal expression in the following memorandum :—

"I OFFER myself to my American brethren, entirely to their service, all I am and have, with my talents and labours in every respect, without any mental reservation whatever, to labour among them, and to assist Bishop Asbury ; not to station the preachers any time when he is present ; but to exercise all the episcopal duties where I hold a Conference in his absence, and by his consent ; and to visit the West Indies and France when I can be spared.

(Signed)

"THOMAS COKE.*

"*Baltimore, October 27th, 1796.*"

* A resolution which has the appearance of precipitancy. Yet he had already well pondered it. The Doctor had, in fact, through the influence of those pro-

"This instrument," says the historian of American Methodism, "was given and accepted in good faith; and the obligation was sacredly fulfilled on the part of Dr. Coke, until he was honourably released from it by his American brethren." In pursuance of this engagement, he continued to co-operate with Mr. Asbury in various parts of the country through the whole of the autumn and winter.

"Virginia, Saturday, November 5th," says Asbury, "we rode twenty miles. On Sabbath-morning came to Alexandria. Dr. Coke preached on the Wise Men coming to Jesus: brother Whatcoat and myself exhorted. Tuesday.—We rode through awful Fredericksburg to Todd's-Tavern, men and horses being weak and weary....The next day we stretched on to Richmond. Here I persuaded Dr. Coke to rest a day. Saturday, 12th.—Near Chesterfield court-house preached. Re-fitted.—Petersburg. In pain. Heard Dr. Coke preach. Sabbath-day, Dr. Coke gave a comment on the twentieth chapter of Revelation, and then a sermon on Luke xiv. 26. I gave a short exhortation, and ended the service of that pleasant day.

"January 15th, 1797 Charleston.—Notwithstanding illness, I preached on John vi. 66–69. We were much crowded; and more so when Dr. Coke preached in the evening.

"Wednesday, 18th.—We committed the dust of our dear brother Wells to the old church burying-ground. Dr. Coke performed the funeral rites, and delivered an oration."

Many incidents occurred in the course of this itinerancy which would well merit record. At the town of Raleigh, which was the seat of government for North Carolina, Coke preached before the Senate. "I had the speaker's seat. The speaker himself sat below, on my right hand. The attention of the audience was as still as night. As I had been beforehand informed that many of my hearers had imbibed the errors of the modern philosophy, I particularly insisted on the evidences of the

fessional *rixe* which occur even among clergymen, left England with a pain of mind which predisposed him to think favourably of a more undisturbed career in America.

Christian religion. Great were the disputes in the evening, as I was informed, at the lodging-houses of the members of Assembly, concerning the discourse."

On another occasion: "After the service we mounted our horses, in order, if possible, to reach a village called 'The Corner.' But there was a great swamp as well as a broad ferry in our way. When we came into the middle of the swamp, it was almost night. In one place the planters had laid down logs of wood; these, owing to the heavy rains, were loosened, and floated on the water. We first endeavoured to drive our horses over them, but all in vain; we then ventured into a deep ditch, in order to go round them, but in this also we failed; so we were obliged to return in the dark through a miserable road till we arrived at the house of a little planter. He very kindly took us in, gave us a roasted turkey for our supper, and the best beds his house afforded." When arrived the next day at the neighbourhood called "The Corner," he learned that no sermon had been preached there for twelve years.

From this place the Doctor journeyed to Charleston. "On this day's ride we saw a noble eagle standing on the top of a tree, and looking calmly at us. The whole journey was very pleasing. The lofty pine-trees, through which we rode a great part of the way, cast such a pleasing gloom over the country, that I felt myself perfectly shut out from the busy world." At Charleston, where he was joined by Mr. Asbury, they held the Virginia Conference. It was found that the preachers were far inadequate in number to the wants of the district. This led them to decline a pressing call to send missionaries to the Bahamas. The harvest was great, but the labourers were few.

During the last three months the Doctor had been busy during his leisure hours in writing annotations on the Book of Discipline. Asbury had been at work in the same way. They now incorporated their notes, in the form in which they exist in the "Discipline." The notes are truly valuable, and

Dr. Coke seemed to feel it; for, says he, "If ever I drew up any useful publications for the press, this was one of them, and perhaps the best."

At length, with the consent of his colleague, he prepared to revisit England; and on the 6th of February, 1797, went on board an American ship bound for Glasgow. The captain, a Scotchman, was kind and attentive, and the passage, in a social respect, very agreeable; but the weather was tempestuous, though the wind blew in their favour, and bore them in twenty-five days to the mouth of the Irish Channel. Through the violence of the wind the waves stove in the parapet that guarded the deck, so that the Doctor could not walk the deck in safety. One evening a French privateer gave them some anxiety; but they escaped from their pursuer during the night. Three days detained on the extreme Irish coast, the captain, in apprehension of the French cruisers, steered for the North Channel, the more rocky and dangerous. There they were kept, by a steady calm, for sixteen days. "During our detention in the Channel, our captain manifested something like superstition. I was reading with deep attention a folio book on the Bible. Frequently during the calm the captain cried out, 'I wish that book was finished!' At last he burst forth, 'We shall never have a wind till that book is finished!' I then told him I would lay the book aside. 'No,' said he; 'that will not be sufficient: it must be FINISHED, or we shall have no wind!' I doubt not but that he was in some measure confirmed in his opinion; for, just as I had finished the book, the wind sprung up, and in six-and-thirty hours brought us into harbour.

"Thus did the Lord, in His infinite love and condescension, bring me safe to my native land. Blessed be God, I have found seals to my ministry during this voyage. At the Virginia Conference, too, I met with a Welshman who was awakened under my preaching, and is now become a travelling preacher in America. Let all the glory be given where it is so due."

CHAPTER XVIII.

SIXTH INTERVAL, IN SCOTLAND, IRELAND, ENGLAND.

LANDING at Greenock, on the 22d of March, Dr. Coke proceeded to Glasgow and Ayr, in each of which places he ministered to many hundreds of attentive hearers. At that time vital religion was in but a feeble state in Scotland; and the Doctor in his journal bewails the prevalence of Antinomianism and infidelity, which seemed, to his perception, to bear sway over the public mind. He says that a multitude of Scotchmen, seeing nothing in religion but a bare lifeless profession, had fled to Deism as a refuge from hypocrisy. In this deplorable state of things he regarded the continued testimony of the Methodists, by whatever toil or expense upborne, as a duty which they were bound to fulfil; not so much for the establishment of a denomination apart from the national or other existent churches, as to keep alive the flickering spark of true piety, and help to fan it to a flame. Yet this was not without a persuasion that more good would be done on the whole by the consolidation of a Methodist Church in Scotland; as a means both of keeping the members of it from the erroneous teaching which was at that time too rife, and of affording them those aids to piety upon which the Methodists have learned from experience to set such value. In both ways the Wesleyan agencies have done, and are doing, incalculable good in that part of the United Kingdom, gathering the ignorant and those who are out of the way, and diffusing a benefic influence on pre-existent churches, whose clergy are becoming more and more alive to the one great end for which all Christian institutes have been ordained.

On the 29th of March the Doctor crossed the Channel to

Ireland. He found the country severely disturbed with political agitation. Those fatal days were drawing on in which the busy work of democrats and traitors, all bent upon their own designs, and working on the passions of a generous but ignorant and fanatical population, to enlist them as the instruments and tools of their selfish plottings, was about to produce its harvest of bloodshed and ruin. In most of the towns martial law was already in force. "The whole province of Ulster," says he, "is in a violent agitation, and seems preparing for some astonishing blow. I should not be surprised, unless God be pleased to defeat the designs of the wicked, if a second general massacre take place in Ireland."

In the midst of these troubled scenes, Dr. Coke moved among the people as an angel of peace. He preached continually, and had much pious intercourse with the anxious people of God, who needed all the consolation he could give them. Here and there he gives pleasing notices of persons and places, which are worth transcribing. At Armagh, for instance, where "my friends showed me the primate's palace, in which are many capital paintings, especially those of the present king and queen, which were given by his majesty to the late primate. In the library were portraits of all the primates for several ages. The faces of two of them were heavenly. They, indeed, evidenced that the mild, gentle, crucified spirit of the Christian had dwelt in them whose countenances were thus portrayed. The present primate* is a man of very amiable disposition and great learning. His Commentary on the Minor Prophets is an indubitable proof of the latter. I knew him at Oxford when he was fellow and tutor of Hertford college. In the library was an admirable polyglot, containing the Bible in nine languages. We then visited the demesne, gardens, and hothouses, all of which, with the palace, were the gift of the late primate, Dr. Robinson, who possessed a noble soul. The churches he rebuilt and endowed, and the

* Newcome.

charities he instituted, certainly evidenced a very beneficent mind. Before we took our leave of this beautiful place, we visited the chapel, which is within a few yards of the palace. It is neatness, simplicity, and elegance, in great perfection; but, alas! it is never used. What harm would it do the Church or the world, if the Methodist preachers were suffered to preach there the everlasting Gospel of Jesus Christ? In this chapel is a window, on which is painted the story of the merciful Samaritan in a very masterly and affecting manner."

The Doctor says that the Methodist Armagh Circuit was in a flourishing condition. Eleven new Societies had been formed that year, and the Lord was pouring out His Spirit remarkably in many parts of the country.

On the 30th, after riding thirty miles, he arrived at Coote-hill. The new chapel was insufficient for the congregation that pressed to hear, and the larger Presbyterian place of worship was obtained. "I gave out before preaching a favourite hymn, suitable to the text; but the congregation could raise no tune. This induced me to change my text, and herein I afterwards saw the hand of God; for I had reason to believe that the sermon was made a general blessing to the congregation. Ministers of the Gospel frequently perceive the interference of their Lord in matters of this kind....On my former visit to this place a friend introduced me to the Earl of Bellamont, who is justly reckoned a pattern of politeness. We breakfasted with his lordship, who made us a present of a piece of ground, and twenty pounds for the erection of a preaching-house. Our brethren raised the rest, and finished it. The earl took us to see the ground, and then accompanied us to preaching. His park and domain are exceedingly beautiful. What justice do I continually see in those words of our Lord,—'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven!' But 'what is impossible with men, is possible with God,' who can save even a man of riches and power, surrounded as he is with every temptation to luxury and ambition."

Journeying thus through the north of Ireland, the Doctor was much charmed with the kind feelings shown him by Christians of other denominations, and especially by the clergy of the Presbyterian Church. "At Newry," says he, "I spent two days, preaching in the large meeting-house. The kind minister had lent me his place of worship. On my return to the vestry after preaching the first evening, he begged to have the liberty of carrying home my scarf. It was very dirty; but the next evening he brought it back with him before preaching, nicely cleaned."

At the yearly assembly of the Irish preachers, at which the Doctor closed this tour in Ireland, he intimated the great probability that, from the engagement he had entered into with the American Church, he should not have the happiness of meeting them again. In preaching, too, he had sometimes touched on the same topic. It moved him greatly to observe the painful effect this disclosure had upon the feelings of many of his hearers, who "sorrowed," like the friends of the apostle of the Gentiles, "for the words which he spake, that they would see his face no more." Among the preachers at the Conference this trouble was very apparent. He had not known the strength of their affection for him, nor they themselves, till then. It was now that the thought of a final separation awakened feelings that made him waver in his resolve.

These sorrowful movements of the heart grew yet more formidable at the English Conference which followed. Already the tidings of the Doctor's engagement with the American brethren had been current in the Circuits at home; and the ministers, in gathering at their assembly in Leeds, came together fraught with one sentiment. They could not lose him. It might have been that some of them had been unduly jealous of his authority; and that, at the last Conference before his departure across the Atlantic, some expressions had occurred which had given him pain. But now, greatly as they had esteemed his character and services before, their full

value seemed not to have been known till they were in danger of being lost. "They saw in him the spirit of missionary enterprise combined with a perfect knowledge of the details of the work, together with a quenchless zeal which was altogether marvellous. They clearly perceived that the Methodism of England needed such a man, and sought to reclaim him." * Urged, probably, by these convictions, they elected him at once to the presidential chair, an honour he should have had long before ; and, bringing the matter into full consideration, they entreated him, with words of weighty love, to relinquish his purpose of forsaking them. The Doctor's susceptible mind was dissolved in a conflict of grief and joy. His engagement with America was sacred ; but the fulfilment of it, he felt, would require the sacrifice of the most tender affections of his breast. He could only find relief in bowing at the throne of Providence, with the prayer that the God who had led him all his days would now dispose of his future lot after the sole counsel of His holy will. So, in the fear of God, they resolved to make an appeal to the American brethren to release their bishop from his covenant bond ; and Dr. Coke, on his part, was induced to express his willingness to recede from the engagement, "provided his promise could be repealed with honour." Thus the subject was placed in abeyance, to be decided at his next American visitation.

At this Leeds Conference, at which Dr. Coke (as already said) was president, and Mr. Bradburn secretary, the great event was the forthgiving of the famous Act of Pacification, by which the turbulent controversies about the sacraments, and the correlative liberties of preachers and people, were, to the great comfort of both parties, brought in some good measure to a termination. To this important document, the Magna Charta of Methodism, which at once defines the authority of the pastorate, and gives all proper guarantees against its improper exercise, Dr. Coke had the honour of affixing his name, as the

* Smith's "History of Methodism," vol. ii., p. 306.

president for the year. It is remarkable that though for several years the tempests of controversy on those now adjusted matters had so shaken the church, the English Connexion had nevertheless increased during the year by more than four thousand members. The Conference terminated in the middle of August; and within a few days Dr. Coke was again at sea.

CHAPTER XIX.

SEVENTH VOYAGE OUT.

THE American schooner "President," Captain John Andrew Smith, sailed from Liverpool on the 28th of August. They had scarcely got into the offing before the weather became difficult, and five days were spent in clearing St. George's Channel. But when at length the ship was fairly on the broad Atlantic, she betrayed so crazy a condition as to excite gloomy anticipations. The leakage already brought the pumps into requirement, and the increasing inflow of water warned them to retrace their way, while still within reach of the Irish coast. The ship was therefore put about, and taken into Londonderry. When, on the 4th of September, the damage having been repaired, they ventured out with many symptoms of continued bad weather, their fears soon proved but too well founded. The wind rose high, and for five dreary weeks they were beaten with perpetual storms. During this trying season the danger at times became too great not to excite their most serious alarm. In the night of the 18th Dr. Coke was roused from sleep by the thunder of the waves, which seemed to be rushing into the recesses of the ship. He sprang from his bed with the idea that the vessel had really foundered in the deep. But having waited, with solemn awe, as on the very edge of the eternal world, he perceived from the motion of the ship that she was yet on the surface. It appeared that a tremendous mountain of water had swept over her from stem to stern, but that she had passed forth from the terrific deluge. Sometimes, among the monstrous waves through which they were beating their way, they could detect

the company of some gigantic fish which hovered near them. Some days later a new source of alarm was opened, in speaking with a Danish vessel, who gave them warning of a shark of another description in the shape of a French man-of-war; which had actually captured them, but from which they had been separated by the violence of the weather. At that time, I need not say, the war had taken its most vigorous stage. The fleets of Spain and France were in mighty force; but Nelson, Trowbridge, and England's other great admirals were fulfilling their career of duty to their country and the world, and the solitudes of the ocean were often broken by the thunder of opposing armaments. An unprotected merchant-vessel, pursuing her timorous way, was therefore in jeopardy every hour. Our voyagers fell in with another vessel, an Englishman, which kept them company several days, and sometimes at so short a distance as to render conversation practicable. They had their tale also to tell, of having been boarded by one of the French rovers; but the cargo consisting only of salt, not contraband of war, they were suffered to proceed. All these circumstances only made the people on board the "President" the more uneasy.

Nor were their apprehensions at all set at rest, when, on Sunday afternoon, the 29th of October, two sails appeared in sight. One of them was soon identified as an American, passing on her homeward course, without noticing them. Not so the other, who, as soon as she had made them out, altered her course, and came down upon them with crowded canvas. The "President" was altogether unarmed, and heavily freighted. Her ostensible cargo was salt; in addition to which the captain had been induced to take in a large quantity of goods in bales. The goods being English would give the Frenchman, by the existing laws, the right of capture. Our people were now in great concern. A French prison, and, on the part of the captain, the loss of ship and cargo, and entire ruin as the consequence, all stared them in the face. Yet there was one omen of hope. The stranger had

been nearing them for more than an hour; and, though her port-holes were open, she yet carried the English flag. Nevertheless her build and look told the worst. It would be decided presently. The flash broke out; the resounding summons spoke; and the privateer, with her whole broadside, ran in abreast of them. There being no possibility of escape either by flight or arms, the captain at once obeyed the peremptory word, "to shorten sail, and send her boat on board." While the boat was gone, the sun went down, and the most gloomy feelings deepened upon the minds of the crew with the shadows of the night. At length the boat was alongside again, but filled with Frenchmen, who boarded, and declared the vessel their prize. The ship's crew were ordered on board the privateer; Captain Smith and his passengers, together with a black cook, were bidden to remain, and the Frenchmen took possession.

The Doctor, and his companions in tribulation, were now anxious to learn what was to come next. As soon as the captors had taken a rapid survey of the ship, one of them, a sort of prizemaster, entered into conversation with them; and they soon found from his bearing and manner that in him they had to do with no harsh or unreasonable man. He endeavoured, indeed, to quiet their fears, and assured them that private property should be respected. He explained also, to relieve any apprehensions of pillage, that the French captain made it a rule in these cases, that whoever appropriated an article should forfeit his share of prize-money. He then went down with them, accompanied by his mate, and joined them over their evening tea. Captain Smith, who had behaved all along with great attention to his passengers, endeavoured also to comfort them as much as possible. As to himself, though a great adversity had come upon him, he bore up with exemplary self-possession. He saw nearly all his property taken from him by the relentless grasp of war, and his own lot that of the captive in a strange land, exiled from wife and children. In the manner in which he con-

ducted himself under these trials, Dr. Coke discerned and admired the spirit of a brave man.

The privateer now steered with her prize for the West Indies. At Porto-Rico the Frenchman succeeded in getting the Spanish Admiralty to condemn the "President" as a lawful prize. The fate of the poor captain I cannot ascertain. As to the Doctor, his perturbation had soon been tranquillized so far as himself was concerned, though he felt deeply for the distresses of his companions. For his own case, he knew that he was in the immediate care and control of One who never forsakes the man who lives to do His will. To do it now was his sole desire. He recollected how, when first he had approached the West Indies, it was by an intervention of Providence which bore the aspect of a calamity, but proved a blessing to himself and to thousands. Who could say that some other task, redundant of blessing to thousands more, might not now lie before him? With thoughts like these, and that intercourse with God to which they prompted him, he became serene, and his will entirely submissive to the appointments of heaven; whether in some new work in the Archipelago, or in the matters on which he had been bent when embarking for the continent.

The decision was soon made. In their winding-up of the affairs of the prize the Doctor found that his captors, looking upon him as a poor harmless priest, were more anxious to get rid of him than to detain him. But, while they made so light of the priest, they made as much as possible of his baggage. That they could not let go, notwithstanding the assurance given at the beginning about their respecting private property. He was thankful, however, to get his papers, and, with barely enough raiment to meet his personal necessities, was permitted to land, and to make the best of his way to the United States.

That same merciful Providence which had so often moved the heart of strangers to "take him in," in his past wanderings on the continent and islands, still showed its presence; and, as he now proceeded from place to place, he seldom found

other than an open door and hospitable treatment. By the latter part of November he was able to join his brethren at their Conference in Virginia. Here his own personal relation to them as one of their bishops, and their plighted servant in the Gospel, was fully acknowledged ; but at the same time an ingenuous confession was made by himself, of the divided state of his inclinations in consequence of the affectionate and earnest remonstrances which his English brethren had offered on the subject of his leaving them for America. These personal confidences were accompanied by an Address brought by himself from the British Conference, deprecating his removal, and stating with strong reasons their request that his engagement with the American Church might not be rigidly enforced.

The result of the discussion which followed we may learn from some paragraphs of the official reply addressed by Bishop Asbury to the English Conference :—

“As you, in your brotherly kindness, were pleased to address a letter to us your brethren and friends in America, expressing your difficulties and desires concerning our beloved brother Dr. Coke, that he might return to Europe to heal the breach which designing men have been making among you, or to prevent its threatened overflow ; I beg to inform you that we have but one grand responsive body, our General Conference, in and to which the Doctor entered his obligations to serve his brethren in America. No yearly Conference, no official character, dare assume to answer for that grand federal body.

“By the advice of the yearly Conference now sitting in Virginia, and by the respect I bear to you, I write to inform you that in our own persons and order we consent to his return and *partial* continuance with you ; and earnestly pray that you may have much peace, union, and happiness together.....

“With respect to the Doctor’s returning to us, I leave your enlarged understandings and good sense to judge. You will

see the number of souls upon our Annual Minutes; and, as men of reading, you may judge over what a vast continent these Societies are scattered. I refer you to a large letter I wrote to our beloved brother Bradburn on the subject.

“By a probable guess, we have perhaps from 1000 to 1200 travelling and local preachers; local preachers daily rising up, and coming forward with proper recommendation from their respective Societies for ordination; besides the regulation and ordinations of the yearly Conferences. From Charleston, South Carolina, where the Conference was held, to the province of Maine, where another is to be held, there is a space of about thirteen hundred miles; and we have only one worn-out superintendent, who was this day advised by the yearly Conference to desist from preaching till next spring, on account of his debilitated state of body: but the situation of his affairs requires that he should travel about five thousand miles a year, through many parts unsettled, and other thinly-peopled countries. I have now with me an assistant, who does everything for me he constitutionally can; but the ordaining and stationing the preachers can only be performed by myself, in the Doctor’s absence.

“We have to lament that our superintendency is so weak, and that it cannot constitutionally be strengthened till the ensuing General Conference. How I have felt, and must feel, under such critical and important circumstances, I leave you to judge. To write much on the subject would be imposing on my own weakness, and on your good understanding. I speak as unto wise men.”

Here, then, the matter rested till the quadrennial assembly which had been appointed to gather in May, 1800, should meet, at which Dr. Coke, if spared, was expected to appear; his engagement being understood and declared to be yet in force. In effect, the American ministers were strongly disinclined to give him up. He was the man they wanted. Asbury himself, whose health was becoming decidedly infirm, was anxious to retain him. Take a sentence or two from that

good man's journal:—"Saturday, Sept. 23d.—I waked with a fever. Received a letter from Dr. Coke. As I thought, so it is: he is gone from Ireland to England, and will have work enough when he cometh there. The three grand divisions of that Connexion are alarming. It is a doubt if the Doctor come to America until spring, if at all till the General Conference. I am more than ever convinced of the propriety of the attempt I have made to bring forward Episcopal men: first, from the uncertain state of my health; secondly, from a regard to the union and good order of the American body, and the state of the European Connexion. I am sensibly assured that the Americans ought to act as if they expected to lose me every day, and had no dependence upon Dr. Coke; taking prudent care not to place themselves at all under the controlling influence of British Methodists.—I visited three families, talked and prayed in each, but was rather outdone." Thus, you see, among the many attributes of Coke's character and life, his episcopal predilections rendered him the more acceptable to his American brethren. Losing him, they knew they should not get a successor who in himself would be a uniting link between the two Connexions, without violating the discipline of either; and, from this very peculiarity, they loved him all the more. So, in the spirit of the compact between them, he now continued for a time among them, and worked through that winter and part of the spring in several of the states. In those six months he does not appear to have kept a journal; but we get a glimpse of him, now and then, in that of Asbury:—"Wednesday, November 15th.—It was a snowy day, and very cold. Rode seven miles cased and curtained up. I kept house at brother Bellamy's. It is seven years since I was here. My mind enjoys peace, but my body is languid. I had a severe fever, and found it time to rest. A Society of nearly forty here is now increased to a hundred; and it is hoped that nearly five hundred have joined this year in the Circuit. I preached at chapel on Heb. iii. 12, 13. It was an exceedingly cold day. We rode

ten miles to John Ellis's, where we were comforted with kindness, and blessed for one short night. We rose early to go on our way; and, behold, who should meet us but Bishop Coke, with a borrowed horse, and a great boy riding behind him on the same horse? We halted, and then agreed that he should have brother M'Kendree's horse. But up came John Ellis, and took the Doctor home, and brought him in a carriage to the quarterly-meeting. We rode thirty-two miles to-day. Saturday, 18th.—I delivered a feeble discourse on 1 Peter ii. 12; and Dr. Coke preached on, 'For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.'"

We have made repeated allusions to the American yearly Conferences. In a pleasing volume, Strickland's "Pioneer Bishop," we have an extract from an unpublished autobiography of one of the preachers, (the Rev. William Thacher,) which gives us a lively idea of such an assembly as a transatlantic Conference of this period. The one now described is that of 1799,—“the first,” the writer says, “in which I was ever honoured with a place and a seat; and I may give a brief account of my adventure on the occasion. About a dozen of us, preachers from the east, landed at New-York, and made our way to the old head-quarters in John-street, bearing on our arms our saddle-bags. We were horsebackmen, and did not use trunks for travelling. We were all plain men, plain enough. We were welcomed at the little old parsonage by the venerable Thomas Morrell and Joshua Wells, the ministers in the station. Brother Wells took us as he found us, bag and baggage, formed us in rank and file, and placed himself as captain at the head of the company. We were in Methodist preachers' uniform, in military style. Our walk, especially through Chatham-street, seemed to attract attention. We were soon disposed of at different places. Conference was held in the old hive of Methodists, John-street church. What a congregation of Methodist preachers! What greetings, what love beaming in every eye, what gratulation, what rejoicing, what solemnity! The clock strikes

nine. We are in the old sanctuary, in Conference, assembled around the altar, within the rail of which sits the venerable Asbury, Bible in hand. A chapter read, a hymn sung, we kneel. How solemn, how awful, how devout the prayer! What amens are responded, what a Divine effusion! Inspiration seemed to pervade the whole. Prayer ended, the secretary calls the roll, and we proceed to business. Six hours are spent each day for the transaction of business,—from nine to twelve, and from three to six; each session opening by reading the Scriptures, singing, and prayer, and closing by prayer. At length the Conference draws to a close; the bishop looks solemnly around upon us, the doomsday document trembling in his hand. He reads intuitively each countenance, tracing the suspense and solicitude of his anxious sons, all eager to fly to their work, yet fearing as to the place where they shall be sent. Though the suspense was painful, the slow, solemn, concluding address of the bishop gradually rolls along, occasionally stopping in its progress, until its close. Then taking the Hymn-Book, he reads,—

‘The vineyard of the Lord
Before His labourers lies;
And, lo! we see the vast reward
Which waits us in the skies.’

We sing, we kneel; and O, what a prayer! What unction from heaven! We rise, and then the hidden, sealed instrument is all a revelation; the benediction is pronounced, and we separate.”

CHAPTER XX.

SEVENTH INTERVAL IN ENGLAND, IRELAND, AND THE
NORMAN ISLES.

SHORTLY after his arrival from America in the summer of 1798, Dr. Coke, being still president of the English Conference, made an extensive visitation in Ireland, at that time convulsed with the fearful insurrection whose history may be written in words of blood. To depict the scenery of this struggle has been the province of the historians of the period, and to their pages we refer our readers. What belongs to our own subject leads to the remark, that Coke was moving about among the Methodists during the most trying weeks of the season. A multitude of them promptly joined the Loyalist army, and did their duty to their country like men who feared God and honoured the king. It is recorded that "at Kilbeggan a small party of yeomen, many of whom were Methodists, met the rebel army approaching to burn the town. The yeomen were led by Mr. Handy of Braecacastle, an intimate friend of Dr. Coke. This gentleman and his sons, in conjunction with the yeomen, fought in the bravest manner, and, repulsing the rebels with considerable loss, gained a complete victory." It was a Methodist class-leader in Dublin who, the night before the Rebellion broke out, gave the alarm to the lord-lieutenant, Camden. It appears that on that night "one of the United Irishmen came to his brother in Dublin about eight o'clock, entreating him to leave the city that very night, with his wife and children; but without assigning any reason for this extraordinary request. His brother, who was a leader in the Wesleyan Society, withstood his entreaties for a time, and finally compelled him to retire in

tears, from the refusal in which he persisted to the last. Left alone, he began to reflect that the length and earnestness of his brother's importunity had an air of mystery which required attention. With this feeling he went to the marshal-provost, and informed him of the whole affair. The marshal went at once to the castle, and laid the suspicious circumstances before the lord-lieutenant. His lordship, who for some time had anticipated a rising, was instantly alarmed. The castle-guns were fired, the drums beat to arms, and about eleven at night an army of regulars and volunteers marched from the city." Only three miles from Dublin, they met the rebels approaching the city in full force. A battle ensued, and the insurgents were defeated. Yes; the Irish Methodists were faithful. They would be so again. Happily, better days have come for Ireland.

The country being at that time under martial law, there was an apprehension among the preachers that the government would object to the assembling of the Conference in Dublin; but Dr. Coke had a communication with the lord-lieutenant, who had known him from his youth, and obtained from his excellency full permission for the uninterrupted exercise of their usual custom. They accordingly met in the month of July. In a fraternal letter to the British preachers they make some allusions to their circumstances, which have an historic interest:—"Though the troubles of our nation when we last addressed you were sufficiently alarming, they were only the beginning of sorrows. Never did we expect to see so awful a day as we now behold! The scenes of carnage and desolation which open to our view in every part of the land are truly affecting; and while we shed the tear of commiseration over our unhappy country, and our deluded countrymen in arms against the best of sovereigns and the happiest constitution in the world, we cannot help crying, 'O God! shorten the day of our calamity, or no flesh can be saved.'

"To attempt a description of our deplorable state would be vain. Suffice to say, that loss of trade, breach of confidence,

fear of assassination, towns burned, countries laid waste, houses for miles without inhabitants, and the air tainted with the stench of thousands of carcasses already cut off, form some outline of the melancholy picture of our times. However, in the midst of this national confusion, we and our people in general, blessed be God, have been wonderfully preserved, though some of us were imprisoned for weeks by the rebels, exposed also to fire and sword in the heat of battle, and carried, surrounded by hundreds of pikes, into the enemy's camp, and plundered of almost every valuable; yet we have not suffered the least injury in our persons. And moreover God, even our own God, has brought us through all to see and embrace each other in this favoured city.....Our Conference was not only held without molestation, but by permission of his excellency the lord-lieutenant. Under God we owe this permission to the exertions of our worthy president, Dr. Coke; who, upon hearing of our danger and distress, flew on the wings of love from your land of safety and happiness to partake of our sufferings, and to help us on our way to heaven. We feel ourselves highly obliged to him; and our hearts are so knit to him, that we are assured you will approve of our earnest desire to have him delegated by you to us, not only to travel through our kingdom, but to preside among us the ensuing year. We consider this request as a duty we owe to Dr. Coke, whom we wish to share in the sunshine of prosperity with us, which we hope will ere long rise upon our land, as he now does our adversity in the dark and cloudy day."

From Ireland the Doctor proceeded by way of Liverpool and Wales to Bristol, where the annual assembly of the English preachers was about to be held. The new president was Mr. Benson. The returns of members showed that the English Connexion, for the first time, exceeded a hundred thousand; and Coke had the satisfaction of reporting nearly twelve thousand members on the mission lands; exhibiting an increase in that department of more than three thousand the last year.

Among other papers I have a letter written at this time by Dr. Coke to Mrs. Fletcher, of Madeley ; and since, as a relic of that saintly person, it may be acceptable to some who peruse this book, it shall be transferred to our pages. It is dated, "Bristol, July 31st, 1798."—"I return you many thanks for your kind letter, and for the confidence you place in me. I will readily accept your offer of the remaining copies of my late venerable friend your pious and affectionate husband's poem, '*La Grace et la Nature*.' I will take pains to circulate them in the most proper manner I am able, and with all the delicacy I am master of. I feel myself very grateful on account of your observation, 'The profit should be personal.' Whatever I can spare myself, as well as receive from others, I apply to the carrying on of the great work of God among the Negroes, a work which particularly lies upon me.

"I fully purposed, my dear madam, to do myself the favour of spending at least one evening at Madeley on my return from Ireland, till about the close of the Irish Conference, when I found it absolutely necessary to make all possible haste to Bristol. In looking over the maps, it appeared to me that I should save from forty to sixty miles by going through Carnarvon and over the mountains ; and a day, or a day and a half, would have been of great consequence to me. I accordingly set off ; but, alas ! I had made no allowance for the continual ascent and descent of great mountains, or going round them ; and therefore found that I saved no time at all, but rather the contrary.

"I beg you will pray for me. I am very weak ; but God is my Friend. My health of body has been increasing of late weekly. I want the prayers of my friends ; O, I want the fervent effectual prayers of the righteous, and am sure I shall have yours.

"I am now in the midst of the business of Conference ; otherwise I would write to you a longer letter. If you are pleased to write to Mr. Hindmarsh about the copies of the poem, I'll beg the favour of you to direct him to send them

for me to Mr. Bruce, bookseller, City-road, who is my agent for all my little matters; and I will give him directions to bind one hundred copies, that I may have them ready when I arrive in London."

In the island of Guernsey, where the exigency of the times required the embodiment of all the men in a military organization, a municipal law made it incumbent on the militia to turn out on Sundays for drilling. To this irreligious ordinance the Christian portion of the people had a steadfast objection; and, through a representation to the parent government, the king in council was pleased to set his veto on the law, so far as it had been coercive on the conscience of any man in the island who preferred to learn the exercise on any other day. This had taken place in 1794. But in the present year, 1798, a similar law was brought into force in Jersey, with the penalty of banishment for recusants. When Coke heard that this new law had been sent up to London for the sanction of the royal approval, he made a statement to his majesty's minister of the great inconvenience its operation would inflict upon the religious people of the island, and implored the government to withhold the required sanction. The cabinet, in considering the case on these representations, were strongly divided in opinion. One of the ministers, having corresponded with the commander-in-chief in Jersey, communicated to Dr. Coke his opinion that it would be expedient for him to withhold any further opposition. The Doctor nevertheless persevered, respectfully, but firmly, and was not long in ascertaining that his pains were not fruitless. King George refused his assent to the law. Coke's letter of thanks to the premier is still extant:—

"NEW CHAPEL, CITY-ROAD, *Dec. 15th*, 1798.

"MY LORD,

"I CANNOT refrain from expressing to your lordship the great obligation I feel to his majesty, and to you, my lord, to the privy council, and to the government, for your and their

gracious interference on behalf of our distressed friends in Jersey. I am perfectly conscious that nothing but pure justice would or could move you, my lord, or the government, in the affair; and yet the sense of your goodness will be indelibly written on my heart. I have the honour to be, with very high respect, my lord, your highly obliged, very humble, and obedient servant,

“T. COKE.

“To the Right Hon. the Earl of Liverpool.”

The Doctor went hereupon to the islands, and spent some days with his old friends. “I am now in Guernsey,” writes he, “on my return from Jersey. I have been endeavouring to put an end to a persecution of our people which was carried on for about six years. The Lord has given me the hearts of the king and his council, and enabled me to bring the business to a happy conclusion.”

Some three months after, he was engaged in another negotiation, not this time with the heads of the State, but with those of the Church; and for an object, the attainment of which would, in his view, lead to most beneficial consequences, both to the Establishment and to the Methodist Connexion. The anomalous position in which Methodism in those days stood toward the Church had been productive, as we have already said, of no small disquietudes among the Societies; and the concessive arrangements provided for in the recent “Plan of Pacification” had failed hitherto, with respect to the sacramental question, with men of his own way of thinking, to give satisfaction to the extent that was to be desired. The Doctor’s view of the case was simply this: If nothing could be done to afford the members of the Methodist Societies the administration of the sacraments by truly evangelical clergymen holding orders in the Church of England, their own ministers should most certainly dispense those ordinances themselves. But he saw, from the rapid progress of this practice, that it would issue at no distant time in a total

alienation of the Methodist people from the Church; a result which he greatly deprecated. Pondering these difficulties, it appeared to him that, to satisfy the wish of the Societies for the holy communion in their own places of worship, and yet to maintain a certain connexion with the Church, the most practicable measure to be adopted would be "to have a given number of the preachers, proposed by the Conference, episcopally ordained, with liberty to travel through the Connexion for the purpose of administering the sacraments to the Societies." On this scheme he took the advice of the attorney-general, an old Oxford acquaintance, who gave him his opinion in favour of it. We should observe, that in taking these steps he was acting quite on his own responsibility, and not as the official or appointed representative of the Conference. Before even proposing it to their consideration, he wished to ascertain the soundness, or even the possibility, of the measure itself. Finding, then, from the attorney-general, that there would be no legal impediment to it, he submitted his plan to the Bishop of London in the following letter:—

"MAY IT PLEASE YOUR LORDSHIP,

"I HAVE felt a strong inclination, for more than twelve months past, to take the liberty of writing to your lordship on a subject which appears to me of vast importance; I mean, the necessity of securing the great body of Methodists, in connexion with the late Rev. John Wesley, to the Church of England.

"The Methodist Society, in England only, consists of between eighty and ninety thousand adults in close connexion. Our regular hearers amount, I believe, to full six times as many upon the average, inclusive of the Societies; so that the regular hearers make up half-a-million. They are friends of the Liturgy of the Church of England, and of its Episcopacy. But there is one thing which I greatly dread, and which I am afraid, if not prevented, will in the course of years have a very fatal tendency.

“A very considerable part of our Society have imbibed a deep prejudice against receiving the Lord’s Supper from the hands of immoral clergymen. The word ‘immoral’ they take in a very extensive sense; as including all those who frequent card-tables, balls, horse-racing, theatres, and other places of fashionable amusement. I have found it in vain to urge to them that the validity of the ordinance does not depend upon the piety or even the morality of the minister; all my arguments have had no effect. In consequence of this, petitions were sent, immediately after the death of Mr. Wesley, from different Societies, to our Annual Conference, requesting that they might receive the Lord’s Supper from their own preachers, or from such as Conference might appoint to administer it to them. For two years this point was combated with success; but, some of our leading friends conceiving that a few exempt cases might be allowed, opposition to the measure was overruled. These exempt cases, as had been foreseen, have annually increased; so that now a considerable number of our body have deviated in this instance from the Established Church; and I plainly perceive, that this deviation, unless prevented, will in time bring about an universal separation from the Establishment.

“But how can this be prevented? I am inclined to think, that if a given number of our leading preachers, proposed by our General Conference, were to be ordained, and permitted to travel through our Connexion to administer the sacraments to those Societies who have been thus prejudiced, as above, every difficulty would be removed. I have no doubt that the people would be universally satisfied. The men of greatest influence in the Connexion would, I am sure, unite with me; and every deviation from the Church of England would be done away.

“In a letter which a few months past I took the liberty of writing to your lordship on the business of our Societies in Jersey, I observed, that for a little time I had been warped from my attachment to the Church of England, in conse-

quence of my visiting the States of America ; but, like a bow too much bent, I have again returned. But I return with a full conviction that our numerous Societies in America would have been a regular Presbyterian Church, if Mr. Wesley and myself had not taken the steps which we judged necessary to adopt.

“ Perhaps, my lord, I may urge the importance of the present proposition, that the promotion of union among Christians was never so necessary as in the present age, when infidelity moves with such gigantic strides. However its numerous votaries may disagree in their philosophic tenets, they cordially unite to oppose Christianity. It is only between the Methodists and the Establishment that we can hope for any cordial and permanent union to take place.

“ If this point be worthy of your lordship’s consideration, I could wish that something might be done as soon as convenient ; as some of my most intimate friends, to whom I have ventured to disclose this plan, are far advanced in years. These are men of long standing and of great influence in our Connexion. The plan meets their decided approbation and cordial wishes for success ; and I have no doubt they would lay down their lives with joy, if they could see so happy a plan accomplished. If an interview shall be thought necessary, on your lordship’s signifying it, I will visit London for the purpose about the beginning of next month. About the end of April my private plan will lead me to visit our numerous Societies in Ireland, and I shall not return till the end of July, at which time our General Conference will be held in Manchester. In September I intend setting off for America, to make a short visit of six or seven months to our Societies on that continent, unless some business of the first importance prevent it.

“ I did myself the honour, about a year ago, to lay this whole plan before the attorney-general ; and, so far as a cursory view of the business could enable him to speak, he greatly approved of it, and some months past encouraged me to lay

the whole at the feet of your lordship. This I have now done ; and I pray you, my lord, whatever be your lordship's judgment, to forgive the liberty I have now taken. I have the honour to be, my lord, &c., &c., "T. COKE.

"Manchester, March 29th, 1799."

The candid spirit in which that amiable prelate, Bishop Porteus, received this communication, speaks in the reply which the Doctor had from him seven days after :—

"ST. JAMES'S SQUARE, April 5th, 1799.

"REV. SIR,

"I RECEIVED the favour of your letter, and have read it with great attention. It contains much important matter which well deserves very serious consideration. The object you have in view is certainly very desirable ; but how far the means you have proposed for attaining it are practicable, I cannot at present pretend to judge. But you may rest assured that I shall turn the subject frequently in my thoughts, and converse with the two archbishops upon it ; and whenever we have formed any decisive opinion on the question, you will hear of it from one of them, or from, Sir, your faithful and obedient servant,

"B. LONDON."

Dr. Coke waited with some anxiety during the interval which elapsed till the notification of the archbishop's decision. In rather more than a fortnight it came, and in terms which seemed to set the question, in that particular at least, most entirely at rest.

"LAMBETH HOUSE, Tuesday Evening, April 22d, 1799.

"REVEREND SIR,

"NOT having had it in my power to keep my promise of writing to you by last night's post, I assure myself of your pardon for that omission ; and I now proceed to inform you of my sentiments, and those of the bishops with whom I have

communicated on the subject of your letter, after the fullest and most deliberate consideration of its contents.

“That persons of tender consciences who have scruples in respect to any points of religious doctrine or discipline should be allowed all reasonable indulgence, we hold to be just and proper. But that a scruple avowed to be founded on a presumption that all the regularly ordained clergy of the Church of England are immoral should be given way to, and that the bishops should on such a suggestion ordain a number of persons upon the recommendation of your General Conference, without any other inquiry as to their fitness, and without any title or appointment to any place where they might legally exercise their functions; such a proposal, merely for the purpose of supplying congregations which scruple to receive the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper at the hands of our ministers whom they deem unworthy, with pastors whom they more approve, we must think it highly unjustifiable in us to comply with.

“We cannot but lament that persons of a religious and serious turn of mind should be likely to be separated from our communion by an ill opinion of our clergy, which we think ill-founded, and upon a principle erroneous and not to be admitted were the opinion true. (See the Twenty-sixth Article of the Church of England.)

“We hope and trust, however, that a consequence so much to be deprecated may be averted by God’s blessing on your pious exertions to bring your people to a better mind.

“To His holy protection I commend you heartily; and am faithfully, and with all good wishes, your humble servant,

“J. CANTUAR.”

I insert this important correspondence entire, because it may serve as an element towards the solution of a problem which still arrests the attention of ecclesiastical men,—the comprehension of the Methodists, AS SUCH, within the pale of the Established Church.

CHAPTER XXI.

IRELAND AND AMERICA : EIGHTH VOYAGE OUT.

IN the early summer of 1799 Dr. Coke revisited Ireland. The reply of the last English Conference to the appeal of their Irish brethren, that he should be still appointed their president, is conveyed in words which bespeak the lofty estimate they had learned to make of his character :—" Your request concerning Dr. Coke is granted. We consent to his being our representative and your president, should the Lord spare him the ensuing year. He has for seventeen years annually visited our friends in different parts of Ireland. His service to you in these critical times, under Divine Providence, is cause of rejoicing to us ; and we trust he will still be enabled to serve you in the same way." They add, " We have made up all your deficiencies, though we have been obliged to borrow a thousand pounds to make up our own."

In his late visits to Ireland, Dr. Coke had been more than ever impressed with the necessity of organizing a native agency for the evangelization of the Irish peasantry through the medium of their own language. He now set about making a practical commencement of such a work, by originating the Irish missions. One of the first men employed was Gideon Ouseley. This eminent and truly apostolic man had sprung from a family of high consideration in the county of Galway, the members of which have shed a lustre upon their name. In this respect it is enough for me to mention his brother, Major-General Sir Ralph Ouseley, and his two cousins, Sir William and Sir Gore Ouseley,—the latter one of the most distinguished Oriental scholars of his day. Mr. Gideon Ouseley, who had received an equally liberal education, con-

verted to God about the age of twenty-six under the ministry of the Methodist preachers who visited the neighbourhood of his father's estate at Dunmore, consecrated his life to the service of Christ, and became one of the most energetic and successful evangelists that ever preached the Gospel in the Irish language.

The mission thus inaugurated has continued in operation to the present day. It now employs about thirty ministers spread over the country, in fulfilling a work which brings the Gospel to the ears of myriads of the Irish, and not unfrequently in their own ancestral tongue. At the time of which I am writing, the first two missionaries, Graham and Ouseley, struck at once into the most disturbed parts of the country, unfurling the white banner of the Gospel in the counties of Wicklow, Wexford, Kildare, Carlow, and Kilkenny, and preaching peace by Jesus Christ in towns the very streets of which had lately been the scenes of bloodshed and carnage. "The first visit they paid to the town of Enniscorthy was attended with signal success. Mounted on horses, with their black caps on, they proceeded to the principal streets, and crowds gathered around them. The first hymn had a wonderful effect: the word which followed fell with power on the hearts of the people. Some of the blessed fruits of that day's preaching were apparent a long time afterward." So began the good work. The priests of course rose in opposition, threatened their flocks at the altar, and sometimes fell upon them with the horsewhip, when, disregarding of the terrors of the curse, they found them crowding round the preacher. At times, however, the people were against them, as well as the priests. "At Kilkenny," writes Ouseley, "they seemed bent on murdering us. Brother Graham was not hurt, but I got bruises. The whole town was in an uproar. If we had not turned into the barracks, I suppose we could not have escaped. The mayor and the commanding-officer came forward, and escorted us out of the town." At Cookstown, "the people crowded from every quarter. Catholics came that morning

three or four miles to hear. The power of God seemed to touch every heart. Almost the whole congregation were in tears. I hope this seed-time will, through the mercy of Him who waters the furrows of the field, be followed by a glorious harvest."....."From thence I returned to Red-hill," in the county of Cavan, "and preached in the market of Ballyhays to an attentive multitude, the cry of whom was, 'Tis all true; 'tis all true!'"

This enterprise having been thus hopefully begun, the Doctor set his face once more toward the distant west. Of his eighth voyage out I can give no particular details. If he kept a journal at this time, it has probably shared the fate of many other papers, which, being taken with him on his last voyage to India, have never more been heard of. All that I can record with certainty is, that, having visited the missions in the West Indies, he proceeded to the American General Conference, which was to meet on the 20th of May in the city of Baltimore, where he appeared among them, to fulfil his bond of service to their Church, or to be honourably released. He had brought with him letters from the last English Conference, conveying their earnest request to the American brethren that the Doctor's promise should not be rigorously enforced; and that, as his presence in England was deemed of much importance to the cause of religion at home and abroad, he might be permitted to return with all convenient speed to his native land. After deliberating on the subject at large, the preachers concurred in the following resolution:—"That, in compliance with the Address of the British Conference to let Dr. Coke return to Europe, the General Conference consent to his return, upon condition that he come back to America as soon as his business will allow, but certainly by the next General Conference." The import of this resolution was communicated to the Wesleyan ministers in England thus:—"We have considered with the greatest attention the request you have made for the Doctor's return to Europe; and after revolving the subject, and spending

part of two days in debating thereon, we still feel an ardent desire for his continuance in America. This arises from the critical state of Bishop Asbury's health, the extension of our work, our affection for and approbation of the Doctor, and his probable usefulness, provided he continue with us. We wish to detain him, as we greatly need his services. But the statement you have laid before us in your Address on the success of the West-India missions under his superintendence, the arduous attempt to carry the Gospel among the Irish, requiring his influence and support, and the earnest request you have added to this representation, 'believing it to be for the glory of God,' have turned the scale at present in your favour. We have therefore, in compliance with your request, LENT the Doctor to you for a season, to return to us as soon as he conveniently can ; but, at farthest, by the meeting of the next General Conference."

With this determination of foregoing the ministry of one of their bishops there came the question, How can this lack of service be supplied? Even were Mr. Asbury's health less debilitated, the increasing magnitude of the work, evermore stretching itself out on a broader area, made it now impossible for one man to superintend it. Convinced of the necessity for the election of a coadjutor to Mr. Asbury, the Conference, after a solemn preparation, proceeded to that measure. It was done by ballot. When the suffrages were first counted, an equal number was found for Richard Whatcoat and Jesse Lee. A new ballot proceeded, when there appeared fifty-nine votes for Mr. Whatcoat, and fifty-five for Mr. Lee. Mr. Whatcoat was thereupon declared to be duly elected ; and on the 18th of May was consecrated a joint-superintendent, by prayer and the laying on of the hands of Bishops Coke and Asbury, assisted by certain presbyters.

Mr. Whatcoat had been ordained a deacon and a presbyter by Mr. Wesley ; and, as will be recollected, had been appointed by him to accompany Dr. Coke to America in 1784. He was now in his sixty-fourth year, and had pursued a laborious and

honourable career as a Methodist minister for thirty-one years, the last sixteen of which he had spent in hard toils in the United States, generally fulfilling the duties of a presiding elder, "which, in those days especially, required labours and privations of no ordinary character, as both the Districts and Circuits were large, and the people in general poor, and the calls for preaching numerous and often far apart.....And the manner in which Mr. Whatcoat fulfilled the high trust now confided in him fully justified the wisdom of the choice; for no man ever furnished more satisfactory evidence of his entire devotion to God, and his unwavering attachment to the interests of religion. His meekness and modesty, his gravity and dignity of deportment, pointed him out as a fair sample of a primitive bishop, in whose integrity all would confide as a father and a friend." *

Dr. Coke, who had made his West-India visitation on his way this time to America, did not prolong his stay much beyond these transactions; but made all possible haste to resume his work in Ireland, where he spent some time in the summer previously to the yearly gathering of the preachers, among whom he once more presided; and then crossed to England, to fulfil the duty of secretary to the Conference at Leeds.

* Bangs's "History of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America."

CHAPTER XXII.

EIGHTH INTERVAL IN ENGLAND.

THE annals of this man's life form a chronicle of good works. The Irish mission, which had been set on foot with such auspicious omens, was now followed up by a similar project for the benefit of the Welsh-speaking population in his own native principality. In frequent peregrinations in Wales, the Doctor had become aware that though the Gospel was preached from many pulpits, both by Churchmen and Dissenters, there were yet numerous neighbourhoods where the native speech was the only vernacular, and where the ordinances of the Gospel were comparatively unknown. "Myriads of the Welsh," says he, "are still in spiritual darkness, and living in the practice of vice, to whom ministers speaking their own tongue might, on the itinerant plan, find access through the blessing of God, when the settled ministers are not able to reach them, from their reluctance to receive the Gospel in the first instance, unless it be brought to them, as it were, in the highways and hedges." After looking about for suitable men, he found one, and then another, whom, by the effects of their first labours, Providence appeared to have raised up expressly for the work. At the Conference, where, in response to a moving appeal made by Coke, the matter had been taken into hearty consideration, a young Welsh minister, John Hughes, volunteered for the work, could he be joined by a suitable colleague. Whereupon Owen Davies, another Welshman, of eleven years' standing in the ministry, expressed his willingness to share the undertaking. The two were immediately appointed, and the town of Ruthin specified as their

head-quarters. They proved themselves well qualified for the sphere assigned them. Mr. Hughes had benefited by a clerical education, having been intended for the Church; and was "not only a good scholar and a thorough Welshman, but a man also of clear understanding and sound judgment." With him, the intelligent, generous, and warm-hearted Davies, an able preacher and a sound Methodist, was well associated in this embassy of good-will to the neglected children of Cambria.

And the Lord of the harvest so prepared their way that they found no difficulty in their access to the people, who from the first heard them gladly. The energy and wisdom with which the missionaries began and sustained their labours are shown by their effects. Four years after the commencement of the undertaking, Mr. Davies writes to Dr. Coke: "The Lord does certainly smile on our mission, and honour us with abundant success; and I am encouraged to hope that His word will still run and be glorified. I believe there are more praying people in Wales than there ever were. Therefore am I led to hope that He will rain down righteousness upon us. I am far from considering it a trivial thing in having been able to complete seventeen preaching-houses, and to be engaged in building eleven more; no trivial thing, to have raised about four-score Societies; no small mercy to have about twenty local and ten travelling preachers to run to and fro in the Principality, that knowledge may increase." Such was the fruitage of the first four years.* In the tenth year, sixty chapels had been built, attended by large congregations,

* Among the contemporary notices of this good work, there is one which occurs in a letter of the Rev. Jabez Bunting to the Rev. George Marsden, which we take the liberty of transcribing from the excellent biography of the former, on account of the singular fact the writer mentions in connexion with it:—

"The Welsh mission is still astonishingly successful. Some of the most serious clergy, who encourage the mission, if any of our preachers are present, are in the habit of desiring them to stand by the communion-tables, and to give out our hymns, while the sacrament is administering."—*Life of Dr. Bunting*, vol. i., p. 146.

with no less than five thousand communicants, from among whom many preachers, local and itinerant, had been raised up to proclaim the truth to thousands more. At the present time there are sixty preachers stationed throughout Wales, whose ministry is carried on in the native speech. Thus, in these Irish and Cambrian missions, two of the oldest languages of the earth had been consecrated as vehicles of Gospel truth on the lips of Methodist preachers.

Meantime Dr. Coke had been diligently employed not only in his own travelling and pulpit labours, but at every available hour by day and night in prosecuting his great expository work on the Bible. So incessant had been his efforts in this department, that two years before (1799) he was able to announce the Commentary on the Old Testament to be in sufficient forwardness to propose its immediate publication. The greater part of this Herculean work he himself had accomplished. I make this remark, because there is a general impression to the contrary. The material, indeed, much of it, was not strictly original; and which of our English commentaries is, in this respect, an exception? But the task of compilation, condensation, amplification, and adaptation, he had encountered nearly altogether himself. At a later day, and when the work was approaching its close, he secured indeed the assistance of an able editor, in that eminent man, Mr. Drew, who revised and supplemented Coke's labours; and to that connexion we will refer hereafter at the proper time. But hitherto the Doctor had worked on his own account. It was now proposed to publish the Commentary in parts, or "numbers," the first of which was issued from the press in 1801.

Touching these literary matters, I may mention a circumstance which occurred just then, that would be unworthy our attention, except as affecting the sacred memory of the great Founder of Methodism. Among the numerous *brochures* which for some time after his decease professed to give the public a history of his life, was a clever pamphlet, published

anonymously under the title of "An impartial Review of the Life and Writings of the Rev. J. Wesley." To give a greater raciness to his production, the author, among other *ana* and anecdotal recollections, inserted two letters of an amatory description, which he affirmed to have been written by Mr. Wesley, in his old age, to a young lady. The letters contained, indeed, nothing strictly immoral, but were written "in a peculiar strain of canting gallantry" which exceedingly scandalized the admirers of Mr. Wesley, and afforded no small gratification to his enemies. The writer of the pamphlet affirmed that he was in possession of the autographs, and promised to deposit them at a certain address for the inspection of all inquirers. Though no one who applied at the place could ever obtain a sight of these originals, the alleged copies thus exposed to the world were reprinted in several of the journals of the day, to the regret and annoyance of all good men who read them. At length, ten years after, the truth came to light. The author of the pamphlet, who had fabricated the letters, had been brought to a better mind. Shocked at the unworthy and injurious part he had played, he could only give relief to his uneasy conscience by making a full disclosure of the villany. He wrote a full confession to Dr. Coke, who, having received from himself full permission to do it, published his recantation to the world, with the heartfelt satisfaction of being thus able to vindicate the calumniated character of his revered father and friend.

A new token of hope for England's future had of late years been unfolding itself in the rise and spread of Sunday-schools for the religious instruction of the young. Into this blessed work Dr. Coke entered with his whole heart, and in his wide itinerancies he kept it steadily in view. The county in which I am now writing is greatly indebted to his zeal in the foundation of some of its most flourishing schools for Sabbath-teaching. The Rev. William Beal, writing to me from Liskeard, affirms that the Doctor was "the first who established Sunday-schools in Cornwall, at least in connexion

with the Methodists.....In the year 1803," he continues, "I became a member of the Society; and I remember well that about that year Coke, on his way through Cornwall, came to Liskeard. By him the Sunday-school of this town was founded, an institution which has been of much benefit here. The present mayor for the second year of this town was among the early scholars; and at this school also three ministers in our Connexion received their first public instruction. If the writer [Mr. Beal] could with propriety speak of himself, he might add, by the immediate personal call and request of Dr. Coke he became the first Sunday-school teacher in this town,—perhaps, among us, in the county; and of the first class of boys, of whom some few yet remain."

In the fulfilment, too, of his manifold offices to the cause of the foreign missions, the Doctor had still at times to present himself and it to the notice of the secular government; and, to the honour of the British cabinet be it recorded, never without receiving every encouraging mark of attention and respect.*

The king of England, the best of the Georges, ever showed toward Methodism not only a spirit of toleration, but of religious approval. For Mr. Wesley himself his Majesty cherished sentiments of veneration which did honour to his head and heart; and he well knew that the principles which actuated the Connexion of people under his pastoral care were those of steadfast loyalty. He understood their doctrines with a cordial assent, and regarded their discipline and usages with a friendly feeling. Nay, it has been said that there were times when at Windsor the king himself might have been seen bending his royal head at a prayer-meeting, or listening to the spiritual conversation of some Methodists at their weekly class. In these kindly sentiments towards the Wesleyan people, other members of that royal family have not been ashamed to evince their participation. The friendship of the Duke of Sussex for

* See Note 22.

Dr. Adam Clarke is well known ; and George the Fourth is said to have expressed his opinion that Southey had not done justice to the character of Mr. Wesley. I remember having been told, some thirty years ago, by a gentleman in London, who was a member of the " Committee for guarding the Privileges of the Methodist Body," that on one occasion, when some business relating to their department had brought them as a deputation into an interview with the Earl of Eldon, then lord chancellor, they found the Duke of Cumberland sitting with his lordship. When the gentlemen of the deputation were introduced, his royal highness did not leave the room, but stood apart at a bow-window, while they stated their business to the chancellor. When this had been done, and they were about to take leave, the prince stepped from his retirement and joined their circle, as if he were pleased to have a little conversation with them. " These gentlemen," said he, " are of the Methodist communion, are they not ? I think I heard your lordship mention the name of Mr. Wesley. Ah, I remember once, when a youth, to have sat in the same pew at St. James's with that great man." " O, your royal highness," replied Lord Eldon, " that is nothing compared with what I can say ; for my mother, who was a Methodist, has often taken me, when a child, to hear Mr. Wesley preach at five o'clock in the morning." These little incidents may be thought trifles : still they have their uses, and should not be lost.

CHAPTER XXIII.

NINTH VOYAGE OUT.

IN the autumn of 1803 Dr. Coke made his last visitation in America. Of the voyage we can only say that it was accomplished with a speed unusual in those days. In a note under date November 23d, 1803, and addressed "To Bishop Coke, Baltimore," Mr. Asbury says, "I was a little surprised at the reception of a letter dated Peterburg, only about fifteen days after one dated Dublin, July 4th. You have hastened your escape from the storm and tempest of war and water. May you find a safe retreat, and a field of great usefulness, upon our continent!" The retreat, however, was not to be an idle one; for Asbury proceeds to cut out for his colleague work for the winter which would require, even in the article of travelling, a series of journeys amounting to nearly five thousand miles. The greater part of this heavy plan the Doctor was enabled to fulfil by the time for the General Conference. In the course of his ministrations he preached at Washington, before the American Congress. He took for the subject, "The Wisdom, Dignity, and Importance of the Gospel, as contrasted with the Policies of the World." A gentleman, who took him in his carriage to the Capitol, has left the testimony that "the sermon was considered to be both eloquent and lofty." At the General Conference, which assembled at Baltimore on the 7th of May, 1804, the three bishops presided. The entire Book of Discipline was once more revised; and among other rules inserted there was one which prohibited the bishops from allowing any preacher to remain more than two years successively in any Circuit or station. It was also ordered that the Book of Discipline should be divided

into two parts ; the first to contain the spiritual, the second the temporal, economy of the Church.

In an Address brought by Dr. Coke from the English to the American Conference, the latter were again solicited to allow him to return to England ; and they agreed, upon condition that he should hold himself subject to the call of three Annual Conferences to return when requested, and that, at the furthest, he should, if spared, visit them again at the next general assembly.

“Your request,” they reply to their English brethren, “was taken into our most serious deliberation. We concluded that there is a probability of his being more eminently useful at present in the way you point out, than for us to retain him ; especially as our beloved brother Asbury now enjoys better health, and as we believe with the assistance of our esteemed brother Whatcoat the work of superintending the Church can be accomplished.”

At the termination of this Conference Dr. Coke and Mr. Asbury parted, to meet no more in the present life ; parted, but still joined in friendship indissoluble. As our narrative will not bring us any more into contact with the affairs of the American Church, I may observe, in taking leave of Bishop Asbury, that his love for Dr. Coke lived a deathless life. As each held on his apostolic way, Asbury watched his friend's career with increasing admiration. “January 7th, 1814.—We learn that Bishop Coke and seven preachers have sailed for the East Indies. In less than a hundred years Methodism has spread over three quarters of the globe, and is now about to carry the Gospel of salvation to Asia. Amen.” Alas, the next entry in the journal echoes the distant knell at sea. “Sunday, May 21st, 1815.—By vote of Conference, I preached the funeral sermon for Dr. Coke, of blessed mind and soul, of the third branch of Oxonian Methodists, a gentleman, a scholar, and to us a bishop ; and, as a minister of Christ, in zeal, in labours, and in services, the greatest man of the last century.” I copy the words to show the senti-

ments with which the American bishop regarded his colleague, whom, about ten months afterward, he followed to heaven. The intervening years between Coke's last parting with him and the close of Asbury's life were spent in an almost constant conflict with disease, carried on amid unremitting toil. In the wilderness and in the city he laboured on till the last. He sometimes travelled three hundred miles a week. One of his latest charges to the Conference contains some intimations of the manner of his life and labours at that advanced period. Referring to the Methodist bishops, he says, "We lay no claim to the episcopal state of the Latin, Greek, English, or Lutheran Churches. It will be easily seen that we are so unlike each other that we are not even third cousins. Will their bishops ride from five to six thousand miles in nine months for eighty dollars a year; make arrangements for seven hundred preachers, and ordain one hundred men annually; ride through all kinds of weather and roads at our time of life, the one fifty-six, and the other sixty-nine years of age?"

This was what he did; and amid what circumstances of discomfort, privation, and bodily annoyance, not to speak of the weighty and distressing cares of the churches which oppressed his mind, the occasional disclosures in his journals will bear witness. Yet none of these things moved him, neither did he count his life dear, so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry he had received of the Lord Jesus. Though making no pretensions to literature, he had a great taste for it, and seized a good book wherever in his resting-places he could find one. But his constant companions were the Hebrew Bible and Greek Testament, with which daily reading for many years had made him thoroughly conversant. He had a vivid enjoyment of natural scenery, and his journals contain short outbreaks of the pleasure with which he dwelt on "the noble Hudson with its palisades, the mountains with their towering cliffs," the Ohio and its verdant shores, "the wild Potomac, the lovely Shenandoah, and the thundering Niagara; the natural bridge, under whose arches

I longed to preach ; the endless forests and prairies broad ; the great and wide sea, which reminded me of its Maker who stayeth its proud waves ; the diversified features of the shores ; the palmetto, tall and slender ; flocks gamboling in the shade, or browsing in the sun ; the rolling porpoise ; the sea-gull letting fall the clam upon the rock from on high ; the eagle with hovering wing watching for its prey ; and the white sail of the solitary vessel on the distant wave."

Bishop Asbury preached his last sermon at Richmond, in Virginia, being then in extreme weakness. He was taken to the old Methodist church in a carriage, and borne to a chair on the platform. The crowded and awe-struck assembly listened to his text : " For He will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness : because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth." The tremulous tones of the preacher gave the greater solemnity to the message, which he and they knew should be his last. Before the following Sunday he had arrived in utter exhaustion at the house of Mr. Arnold, a long-trying friend, about twenty miles south of Fredericksburg. On the Sunday morning the bishop, sitting up in a chair, requested the family to assemble for devotion. The Rev. Mr. Bond, his travelling companion, read the twenty-first chapter of the Revelation. While he was reading of the holy city coming down from God out of heaven, Asbury sat looking thither, with uplifted eyes and hands. The domestic service was scarcely closed, when Bond, perceiving that the bishop was sinking in the chair, hastened to support him ; but the spirit had already gone to keep sabbath

" In that Jerusalem above."

CHAPTER XXIV.

PERSONAL AND DOMESTIC.

THE great and good Francis Asbury, of whose last days we have just spoken, had always lived in celibacy. But Dr. Coke, during the last seven years of his course, was permitted to enjoy in some measure the consolations of domestic life; though, as we shall see, the matrimonial relation was not suffered to interfere with those ceaseless activities by which his whole existence was evermore consecrated to the service of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless the time had come when he who had hitherto found no leisure for courtship or marriage became a husband, and a happy one. We shall not apologize for a few personal details here, both from the very nature of our work as a biography, and because we are all supposed to feel much alike in matters of this kind. The maxim of the old Roman is as applicable to these seeming trifles as to the greater realities of life:—"I am a man, and what concerns humanity concerns me." We may remark, then, that Dr. Coke had now reached the staid age of fifty-eight. His personal appearance had not escaped the effects of so many years of toil and travel. In his youth, he is said to have been distinguished by great elegance of mien and manners; and later on in life he had been what is termed remarkably good-looking. A friend who knew and loved him well, the Rev. Jonathan Crowther, sen., referring to his personal appearance, says: "The first time I saw him, which was at Halifax, when he was about thirty-three years of age, I thought him the most handsome man I had ever seen. His face was remarkably pleasing, his eyes dark, and his hair very black." There is also a statement by another friend, Mr. Drew, which describes

him as "finely proportioned, with a pleasing figure. His complexion in those days was remarkably fair, his eyes dark and piercing, his features particularly handsome. There was a freshness on his countenance, which was often animated with engaging smiles. These things, in their combined effects, gave to his whole appearance an expressive softness that refined the masculine features without reducing them to effeminacy. His voice corresponded with his appearance. It was soft and melodious; and, unless carried beyond its natural tone, when it became rather harsh and dissonant, it rarely failed to captivate those who heard it. The animation which beamed in his face was the index of his natural disposition. In intercourse he was cheerful and free; well able to keep alive conversation in diversified forms, since from his incessant travels, his acquaintance with the world, and his knowledge of human character, he was furnished with an ample store of anecdotes which were always sure to engage and instruct."

But, at the time we have now reached, Coke, as I have said, was fifty-eight years old. His once-agile form had come to betray a tendency to corpulence, though by no means exaggerated; his brilliant complexion was bronzed by eighteen Atlantic voyages, and the fervours of a tropical sun; and his waving locks, once of raven blackness, were now thinned by time, and grizzled with the tokens of coming age. His whole appearance and bearing were those of a clergyman, who, notwithstanding his rubicund and portly look, showed plain evidences of having done good work and service in his time, and was yet hale enough to do much more.

Penelope Goulding Smith was the only daughter of a gentleman of good fortune in the county of Wilts. Her father had been a lawyer of extensive practice, and had settled at Bradford in that county. The family of Mr. and Mrs. Smith had consisted at one time of three children, a son and two daughters. One of the latter died while young: the son, who was studying for holy orders at Oriel College, was drowned while bathing in the Isis; and Penelope was thus left the sole

heiress of an ample and increasing fortune. For some few years she participated in what are thought to be the gaieties of life, though with an unusual moderation; and at length, under the growing influence of religious convictions, she threw cards aside, and moved down the dance no more. In a visit to Bristol she had been induced to hear Mr. Wesley and some of his preachers; and under the ministry of Mr. Valton found, what her disquieted spirit had been long seeking, the peace of God in Christ Jesus. On returning to Bradford she consorted with those who were like-minded, and found in the society of the Methodists in that place some amiable friends who were ornaments to the religious community to which they belonged. Her father, now far advanced in years, was divided in his feelings between the tender affection he bore for his daughter, and a sense of family dignity, which he deemed to be somewhat compromised by her association with a sect which had not then, nor ever will have, the stamp of fashionable approval. This feeling of opposition, however, which had the effect for a time of deterring her, through a sense of filial duty, from going often to the Methodist meetings, gradually gave way before the silent influences of her holy life, and, above all, through that Divine Monitor who, having made the child wise to salvation, left not His work of mercy unfinished, but renewed the parent as well. Penelope had now free intercourse with the people of God, and her profiting appeared to all. In works of beneficence, and in intercourse with heaven, her years passed serenely away. She lived, if I may so speak, the life of a holy nun; and, after the death of her father, became more than ever absorbed in devotion at home, and those works of mercy abroad which made her presence in the neighbourhood like that of an angel. When the ear heard her, then it blessed her; and when the eye saw her, it gave witness to her; because she delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had no helper. The blessing of him who was ready to perish came upon her, and she caused the widow's

heart to sing for joy. She found out the abodes of wretchedness to supply the wants of its victims, and, like the good Samaritan, poured in the oil and wine of consolation; literally dressing and binding up the wounds of the afflicted, and helping the aged in their helplessness. It was a feature in her character to try to render all about her happy; and, when engaged in those errands of love, her whole soul seemed swallowed up in her benevolent designs. When she "made a feast" at home, she literally "called the poor," and frequently refreshed them under her hospitable roof; and one who learned to love her well has left it recorded, that "at these times her dignified benevolence and sympathetic spirit penetrated the hearts of those who partook of her bounty. Her whole soul appeared to be devoted to the cause of God, and to the poor of His flock. It was to them a double banquet, which, through Divine grace, at once replenished their wants and cheered their hearts." Another witness of her life has written: "She seemed to be clothed with humility, frequenting the abodes of the most distressed when they were covered with rags and filth; such places as one would scarcely conceive a person of her delicateness would deign to enter: yet she repaired thither to administer relief, and would frequently stoop to perform the meanest offices. Often she has lighted their fires, when she has found them unable to do it for themselves: nothing was beneath her notice, when she thought it in her power to render them any service. Sometimes she has done domestic work in some poor family, to give the mother the hour for going to the house of God, from which she would have been otherwise debarred; and, when enjoying for herself the public means of grace, she seemed to drink in every word, as the garden drinks the dew. She knelt on the floor with the poorest of the people; and, while hearing the sermon, the pleasure which beamed on her countenance displayed the gratification it afforded both to the intellect and the heart."

At home she was a diligent reader. With a well-selected

library, and especially with the word of God, she enjoyed the quiet luxury of study, and derived incessantly new materials of instruction and new motives for their improvement. "This retirement from the world," writes the Doctor himself, "was by no means a state of idle solitude. She chose for her study and devotion a large chamber in the house, which, when I had the happiness of knowing her, I named her Hermitage. This room she had formed into a little museum: natural curiosities, remarkable for their beauty, which she had collected as occasion offered, were there arranged with neatness and order....In this sequestered spot she made herself acquainted with many commentators on the holy Scriptures. The whole of Matthew Henry's voluminous work she read entirely, and that part which was written on the New Testament she read through nearly three times. With Doddridge's Family Expositor, Poole's Commentary, and a variety of smaller works, she made herself quite familiar. It was her custom to make extracts, from books thus read, of such beautiful passages as were expressive of the language of her heart. Those selections, which filled two small trunks, discover a sound understanding, a discriminating taste, and a mind capable at once of relishing the beauties of composition, the flights of genius, and the excellencies of religion."

Such was the lady whom Providence had designed to be the companion of some few happy years of the Doctor's later life. On his return from America he resumed at once, with the accustomed zeal, his own labours as a preacher at home, and his indefatigable applications to the public for the extension of the missionary work abroad. The West-India work by this time had attained such a massive importance as to involve a vast amount of pecuniary care. To meet these responsibilities, he not only drained his own private resources, but toiled from day to day like a common mendicant. Just at this time Miss Smith, in delicate health, was making a sojourn at the Clifton Hot-Wells. Dr. Coke, in the course of his itinerancies, came to Bristol. Sitting one day with

Mr. Pawson, the superintendent of the Circuit, he asked him, according to his usual custom with the preachers, to give him the names and addresses of any benevolent persons whom he chanced to know in the city and neighbourhood, as likely to give him a subscription. "Why," said Mr. Pawson, "there is a lady now staying at the Hot-Wells, who, I should not wonder, would give you something handsome; and, if you like, I will show you myself where she is lodging." It was done forthwith; the two ministers walked over to Clifton, and Dr. Coke first saw his future wife. When he had mentioned the purpose for which he had waited on her, and given her a statement of the merits of the cause for which he solicited her patronage, she replied, to his delight and astonishment, that she should have much pleasure in subscribing a hundred pounds, but that, not having the money by her then, if, as he passed through Bradford, to which she was about to return, he would do her the honour to call at her residence, she would hand him the amount. He accordingly made her a visit at Bradford, and found that she was not only true to her promise, but that she would augment her benefaction by making it two hundred guineas. The Doctor was greatly moved by these displays of Christian generosity; and the further acquaintance with Miss Smith afforded by this visit so entirely subdued him, that he could find no rest till he could offer her his heart and his hand. I shall not speculate on the lady's feelings; they became apparent by her consent; and the spirit in which she fulfilled the alliance in the April of the same year may be divined from a memorandum written on the day of their wedding:—

"We have presented ourselves unto God, and under Him to each other, and were solemnly married in the Lord this morning. O gracious Lord God! accept us, we humbly beseech Thee. Unto Thee we give up our whole selves, all we have and all we are, to Thee altogether and entirely. Accept of our surrender and sacrifice in and through the Son of Thy love. Bless my most beloved husband and me, in our

new relation to each other; O bless us! May we be Thine altogether, Thine now, henceforth, and for evermore! Amen."

The life on which Mrs. Coke now entered was much altered from the quiet seclusion of her past years. Her removal from the little circle among whom her presence had been so prized was no small trial to many of them, as well as to herself. They gathered round her on the day of parting, with tears and prayers. The aged and infirm, who had been so long relieved by her bounty, followed her with their blessings. It ought also to be added, to her honour, that her benefactions to them were not suffered to be interrupted by the change which had taken place in her own lot. Her widows and old people still received their pensions while she lived; and, after her decease, those of them who survived were never forsaken by her bereaved husband.

Life had now acquired a new charm for Dr. Coke; but while his marriage had much enhanced the comforts of home, it was not allowed to interfere with the great concerns which had hitherto absorbed his existence. His habits underwent no change. He journeyed still through the three kingdoms quite as much, and preached as often, as heretofore. The pressing necessities of the missions left him no time for leisure; and the years of his life, he became aware, would soon be passed away. He could say, with the old Hebrew rabbi, "The day hastens, and the work is heavy; but the labourers are tardy, though the reward be great, and the Master pressing;"* or, with St. Paul, "The time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away."†

* Aboth, ii. 15.

† 1 Cor. vii. 29-31.

CHAPTER XXV.

LITERATURE.

WE make no great pretensions on behalf of Dr. Coke as a writer. If his truly respectable erudition, his vigorous intellect, and steadfast resolution of will, had been devoted to book-making as the primary vocation of his life, he would have, no doubt, taken a high rank among English authors. Even with the incessant demands on his time and energies, in working out those higher purposes which have given him an immortal name in the archives of the church, he accomplished an amount of literary labour far greater than what many men have done whose years have been passed in exclusive application to the work of the scholar. What Coke did with pen was done, as we have already shown, in an extempore manner, in snatches of time, under the impulse of some heartfelt necessity, with a strongly-defined object of usefulness, and often amid difficulties and interruptions which, with many other men, would have been enough to drive them to shut up their writing-desk in despair. Yet, midst all these turmoils and tasks, by sea and land, his works are so voluminous that the mere enumeration of them, with the briefest indication of their subjects, will demand the whole of our present chapter.

His earliest effort as an author was the publication of "A Sermon upon Education, preached at the Anniversary of a Public School at Crewkerne, Somerset," in 1773, while he was yet curate of South-Petherton; and the second, a preface to a pamphlet in the Welsh language on the American War, in 1776. These were followed by an "Address to the Inhabitants of Bristol and the adjacent Villages," in 1782; after which we find nothing from his pen till the coming out

of the much-read ordination-sermon preached at Baltimore in 1784, of which we have already given an account. So on, at different times, he submitted to the world discourses delivered in America on the Divinity of our Saviour, and on the Witness of the Holy Spirit; three funeral sermons on the Death of Mr. Wesley, one for the Rev. Mr. Richardson, and another in memory of Mrs. Hester Ann Rogers; four sermons on the Christian Ministry, 1798; and a discourse on the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

On Methodist church-matters, and the polemics relating to them, he edited with Asbury the Book of Discipline for the American Methodist Episcopal Church; and published an address to the Societies in England on the settlement of the chapels, 1795; a statement on the vexed case of Dewsbury chapel in Yorkshire; and an address to the preachers, containing strictures on a pamphlet of Mr. William Hammet. A more important controversial writing related to the doctrines of Methodism, in a series of Letters addressed to the Societies, 1810, occasioned by some erroneous statements of the Rev. Melville Horne, a clergyman who had been formerly a Methodist, and who, at a later day, became the minister of Christ Church, Macclesfield.* In some remarks he had published on the doctrines of Mr. Wesley, he had accused that divine of having "renounced his primary definition of justifying faith," which he affirms had also been done by Mr. Fletcher; and of having taught, on the subject of the Witness of the Holy Spirit, a doctrine which has no foundation in the word of God. In these Letters Coke rebuts the charge against Wesley and Fletcher of versatility on the great principle of justification by faith, and demonstrates the correctness of their teaching on that and the other important subject of Christian assurance, by topical arguments and the testimony of holy Scripture. The work is highly worthy the perusal both of the professional theologian and of the private inquirer into the way of salvation as

* Of Mr. Horne, a man of genius and piety, a pleasing notice may be found in the first volume of the Life of Dr. Bunting.

revealed in the Gospel. About the Life of Mr. Wesley, written conjointly with Mr. Moore, we have spoken already. As the proto-biography of the Founder of Methodism, and written by two of his personal friends so intimately acquainted with the subject, this volume will ever have a distinct and peculiar value. Its simple statements of fact, and utter avoidance of all irrelevant material, contribute to enhance its intrinsic worth.

The Rev. Samuel Wesley, the father of John and Charles, among many other works, was the author of a poem, in heroic verse, on "The Life of Christ." Of this piece, on the merits of which the critics have not spoken with the greatest raptures, Dr. Coke had so high an opinion as to be induced to re-edit an emended edition. To render the present the more acceptable to modern readers, he has retouched the versification, altered obsolete words, and given a general air of freshness and improvement to the composition at large.

In 1808 the Doctor published the first volume of a History of the West Indies, which within three years afterwards he completed in three volumes octavo; a thoroughly good book of the class, and vastly more acceptable to the English reader than a previous work on the subject by Mr. Bryan Edwards, who, though a man of large knowledge and good talent, was too much the advocate of Negro slavery. Dr. Coke's work is arranged in three departments,—the natural, civil, and ecclesiastical history of the islands. Under these heads we have a mass of information well digested and well expressed. While, it must be admitted, he makes free use of materials previously accumulated by Edwards and other writers, he brings to the work his own intimate acquaintance with the topography of the islands, and their civil and ecclesiastical condition, so as to render it a standard authority. Connected with the religious history of the West Indies, he gives a full account of the enterprises of the Moravians for the benefit of the slave-population, and of those later movements on the same behalf which he himself, under Divine Providence, had been so

successful in promoting. In the social history of the West Indies, these missionary details are almost the only relieving lights to a scene which ignorance, sensuality, oppression, and suffering had overhung with a monotonous gloom.

Three other works were begun by Dr. Coke, but left unfinished: one, a polemic against the Bampton Lectures of the Rev. George Nott, in which that clergyman had made a rather virulent attack on the character of Mr. Wesley and Mr. Whitefield. But, after completing his reply, the Doctor was led to see that the rancorous calumnies of Nott "being too severe to make converts, and too monstrous to gain credit with thinking people," might be safely left to themselves, as carrying their own antidote. A second was, a compilation on the History of Philosophy; and a third, a more promising undertaking, in a biblical work, in which it was his design to incorporate the substance of the *Discours Historiques, Critiques, Theologiques, et Moraux* on the Old and New Testaments, begun by Saurin, and carried on by Roques and Ostervald in eleven volumes. With these he would have combined other valuable writings on the literary, archæological, and dogmatic branches of Bible-study. Some portions were printed, but the sale did not indicate that the work would have a sufficient encouragement to warrant the pecuniary venture which so vast an undertaking would render necessary; and Dr. Coke became himself so absorbed at that time in the labour of begging for the missions as to render the prosecution of it impossible.*

Another large branch of Dr. Coke's works is entirely of a missionary character. They detail the particulars of his own first five visits to America and the West Indies, and, in the form of periodical Reports, describe the operations of the missionaries who were labouring under his care.

The Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, the *opus magnum* of our author, was the labour of nine years. Begun by the

* See last part of note 22.

express wish of the Methodist Conference in 1798, its last sheet was ready for the printer on the 7th of June, 1807. The work exceeded the dimensions suggested at first by the Conference, and extended to six quarto volumes. It comprises a great body of annotations selected and arranged from very choice sources, and interspersed with original remarks and reflections by the pious author and the able writer under whose care the latter portions of it were brought through the press. I have already stated that, among the materials for this Commentary, the author had been furnished by Dr. Maclaine with a large collection of expository notes compiled by his father-in-law. Along with these must be associated the collections amassed by the unfortunate Dr. Dodd in the Commentary published under his name. They consist of large contributions levied on Calmet, Houbigant, and other Continental critics, as also of manuscript notes by Dr. Waterland and the Earl of Clarendon, together with some others which the editor states were written by Locke. Subsequent researches, however, have assigned the latter more correctly to Cudworth, the author of the "Intellectual System of the Universe." How they came to be attributed to Mr. Locke appears from the circumstance, that, as an old and intimate friend of Dr. Cudworth, he had been an inmate for several years in the family of Sir Edward and Lady Masham,* at Oates, in Essex; and the papers in question, being found among his posthumous manuscripts, had been considered as the production of his own pen; an error which was at once dispelled when attention was directed to the subject by the comparison of the hand-writing with that of Mr. Locke. The hand is identified with Cudworth's. These papers had been disposed of to Davis, the publisher in Piccadilly, who put them, along with the contributions from Waterland and Lord Edward Clarendon, into the hands of Dr. Dodd, at that time the most popular clergyman in London, who accomplished the

* Lady Masham was the daughter of Dr. Cudworth.

editorial task assigned him in a manner which reflects great credit on his judgment and diligence, weaving up those original materials with others gathered *ad libitum* from various Continental expositors. Now the unhappy fate of Dodd had thrown an adverse shadow on his book, which seemed to have passed into the same oblivion to which public opinion had consigned the memory of its author. Dr. Coke, who from the beginning had entertained a just estimate of the merit of these annotations, felt that he should be doing the Christian world a service by bringing them out again to the light, substantially the same, though circumstantially in another form. He took them, therefore, abridging or supplementing, as he deemed it needful; adding here and there a note of his own, with a rich variety of original reflections which of themselves make the work a very desirable family-Commentary. In appropriating the matter of other expositions in this way, it ought to be observed that he only acted in the spirit and manner of the most popular commentators on the Bible. They borrow from one another whatever they list. Each seems to consider that he has a prescriptive right to help himself as he pleases. I was intimate many years with one of them, whose labours on the Bible are deservedly in high repute,—the venerable Joseph Sutcliffe, M.A. In one of my earlier interviews with him, we had been talking on the merits of the Latin and French commentators. “I have a good many of them up stairs,” said he: “if you will walk up, I will show them to you.” I followed him to the place of books, and, pointing to a magnificent regiment of folios, the good old man spoke: “There they are, sir; and I have gutted them all!” Such has been the current practice. Dodd took from Calmet, and Calmet from many others before him. Coke, then, is not an exception. The whole tribe are predatory, yet with a difference: some of them carry off a great deal of rubbish and inflict it on their readers, while others, with more discrimination, select the precious only. Such, in the main, was the good taste displayed by our Doctor in his

voluminous compilation. The student who has not made himself acquainted with the work may be assured, from the very celebrity of the writers who are laid under contribution in it, that he will not be disappointed in expecting something very good in its possession.

In an Appendix to the Commentary Dr. Coke gave a disquisition on the unfulfilled predictions of the Bible, with especial reference to those which he conceived to be on the eve of accomplishment in the great events of the age. This part of the work he afterwards published in a separate volume, entitled, "The Recent Occurrences of Europe considered in Relation to such Prophecies as are now fulfilling, or remain yet to be fulfilled." His biblical labours comprehended also a smaller edition of the Holy Scriptures, with reflections at the end of the chapters for family-reading. The title is, "The Cottager's Bible."

I may add, that the typography of the larger Commentary is, for that day, unusually fine. The Doctor, who liked all things to be done well, went to a first-rate press with his work, that of the King's printer; and, in addition to his own care in correcting, employed a professional man to supervise the proof-sheets as they came out.

This latter reference reminds me to observe that to another literary person Dr. Coke was under very material obligations, in elaborating the latter part of his Commentary, and some others of his works. I allude here to that eminent man, the late Samuel Drew, M.A.; a man whom an old adversary and yet friend, the Rev. Richard Polwhele, of Cornwall, used to call a metaphysician among Methodists, and a Methodist among metaphysicians. With the earlier productions of this vigorous thinker, and especially his "Original Essay on the Immortality of the Soul," Dr. Coke, in common with a multitude of reading men, had been too much charmed not to avail himself of the opportunities of his visits to Cornwall, where Mr. Drew then resided, to seek the pleasure of his acquaintance. A friendship commenced which lasted with their lives,

and, as we religiously believe, has been resumed in the mansions of the blessed. When Coke and Drew first became acquainted, I think in 1805, the latter was still carrying on the twofold pursuit of making books which awoke the wonder of the highest intellect of England, and of making shoes for the peasantry round about St. Austle. Now the Doctor thought that his friend should quit the process which regarded the shoeing of people's feet, and attend more entirely to the culture of the head. He would have him set apart as one of what Coleridge calls "the clerisy of literature;" and accordingly proposed to him to throw aside awl and last, and betake himself fully to the pen. To render the project more practicable, he himself insured him literary employment to an amount that would give a pecuniary qualification to the step advised.

Mr. Drew, in his own account of this transaction, states that "at that time the Doctor's Commentary on the Bible was verging towards a close; and his History of the West Indies had acquired an embodied form. Being constantly engaged in soliciting support for the missions, and finding their claims on his exertions to increase daily, he lodged some papers in the writer's hands, requesting him to examine them with attention, to notice defects, expunge redundancies, and give on some occasions a new feature to expression. All this was accordingly done, and in many instances his recommendations were fully adopted. This intercourse subsisted for several years, and he received remuneration from Dr. Coke in proportion to the time that was expended in his service."

He goes on, with a delicate and honourable sentiment, to observe: "To what extent this assistance grew, the world is not interested in knowing. The death of Dr. Coke has made the author the sole depositary of the secret, and it is his full intention at present that it shall perish with him.....From motives to which the author will not give a name, many questions have been asked in consequence of the preceding compact, which, in the eyes of ignorance, would seem to terminate to Dr. Coke's disadvantage. In a letter now before

me this sentiment is expressed in the following words: 'What effrontery must any person be possessed of, who imposes upon the public by publishing books in his own name, though written by another, or not ingenuously giving the honour to whom it is due!' To these apostrophes Dr. Coke, in a letter now in the author's possession, has himself furnished a reply. In the year 1811, when this letter was written, he proposed to incorporate the author's name with his own; but in the title-pages of works that had already appeared this could not be done. In such, however, as were then designed to be published, it is probable this incorporation would have taken place, if a change in the mode of his proceedings had not rendered it impracticable, by the disposal of his works to the Conference, and by suspending the plans he had in contemplation. Let such as charge him with 'effrontery' say what, under existing circumstances, they would have expected him to do more." These are the words of the person most intimately concerned in the affair; and they not only exculpate his friend, but reflect very great honour upon himself.

The arrangement between Coke and Drew is by no means a singular one, whatever may be thought of it. Authors of unquestionable talent have been found to avail themselves of similar aids. Buffon, the historian of nature, for example, had large dealings of this kind with Daubenton, Montbeillard, and the Abbé Bexon, to whose pens he was indebted for the most valuable parts of his work. Another case occurs in our own English literature, in which Professor White, of Oxford, had employed a Dissenting minister to render help in the preparation of those magnificent Bampton Lectures on Mahometanism which for a time gave such a renown to his name. But in the transactions of Dr. Coke with Mr. Drew these dishonourable concealments had no place. It was well known that Mr. Drew was his amanuensis; the Doctor gave him an adequate remuneration, and offered to avow his participation in the authorship of those works in which Mr. Drew had achieved any considerable part; a design which was frustrated only by the

necessity under which he soon found himself of relinquishing authorship altogether. It would have nevertheless been much better, in justice to himself, as well as to his companion, to state either in the title-page or preface of each publication that it had passed under the editorial care of Mr. Drew.

In a pecuniary point of view, Dr. Coke got nothing by the press. On the contrary, his losses can only be estimated by hundreds of pounds. He resembled, in this respect, the tailor of the Spanish proverb, "who worked for nothing, and found thread." The great sacrifice was the Commentary. The ill success of the first volumes opened his eyes to the risk, or rather certainty, of the heavy losses which the undertaking would insure. Adam Clarke, who was then on the eve of publishing his own great biblical work, kept an eye on the proceedings of his brother commentator, and felt strong misgivings from the other's discouragements. "I must wait," writes he to Mr. Butterworth: "I understand Dr. Coke is already four hundred pounds the worse for publication." He did wait till the Doctor had completed his work. The sale of the latter, I have no doubt, was much checked by the attention which was then drawn to the remarkable production of the new competitor. In this state of things Coke wrote an appeal to the preachers in the form of a circular address to the superintendents of Circuits, entreating them to use their influence in recommending the work among their people. Meanwhile he employed itinerant hawkers to travel through the country with the Commentary for sale in parts and numbers: a method of business which, from the great expense it incurred, and, it must be added, the dishonesty of some of his agents, had no other effect than to augment his losses. Mr. Drew was against this plan from the beginning, and honestly told him on one occasion "that it would be less to his disadvantage to employ a man at the door of the warehouse* to give away his works to the passengers who walked

* A book-depôt in City-road.

the streets." The Doctor was incredulous, till experience had fully given its painful lessons, and made him a wiser and a sadder man. Worn out at length with these disappointments, he resolved to bid farewell to the press, and get rid of his remaining copies at any price; and he made an offer of his whole stock to the Conference of 1811, together with a warehouse, his own property. The stock amounted, at the trade price, to about ten thousand pounds. He now offered the whole for three thousand guineas, with seven years for the payment by instalments. The overture was deemed so liberal that the Conference were unwilling to accept it at the moment, but wished the Doctor to pause for reflection, and let the matter rest for a year. He did so, but at the Conference of 1812 repeated the offer; and in its ratification, which then took place, was consoled to know that, though he himself had been so great a loser, the works on which he had expended so much toil and treasure would be under an administration the most likely to promote the end for which he had created them,—the glory of God, in the promotion of knowledge and religion among men. The maxim by which he had been moved in his large outlays for the missions supported him in making this new sacrifice: "What is money, when compared with souls?"

But, as regards personal remuneration in the way of pounds and shillings, Coke gained nothing by his pen, but lost much. He may be placed among the *infelices literati*; and if ever a bibliographical martyrology should be written, he would not be considered unworthy of a name among the canonized.

CHAPTER XXVI.

LAST YEARS IN ENGLAND.

ON approaching the seventh decennium of his life, Dr. Coke had arrived at a period when a man whose youth and prime have been spent in unremitting labour, and whose worldly means are sufficiently easy to free him from the need of professional toil, may consider himself, without dishonour, entitled to the solace of passing the evening of his life in repose. Such, however, was not the feeling that prevailed in the mind of Coke. He had become more than ever alive to the wants of the world; the experiments of the past had given supreme demonstration of the efficacy of the remedy for its evils revealed in the Gospel; new facilities for the more wide application of those means were daily opening to him by the providence of God; his own influence over others, now so deservedly great, was regarded by himself as a talent for the improvement of which he was accountable; a sense of responsibility to God, and a fervid charity to mankind, held full sway in his soul; and so, though with some bodily premonitions of the fate which ultimately awaited him, he cheerfully consecrated, in humble dependence on the mercy of the Most High, the remaining days of age to the cause which had claimed the vanished years of adolescence and vigour. Listening then to the Voice which still said, "Occupy till I come," he applied himself to grapple with the remaining tasks of life, in improving the successive opportunities of usefulness which the great Dictator of existence yet opened to his view.

One of these had for its object the more free and full diffusion of the Gospel among the too neglected masses of the

English people themselves. In many of the rural districts, and among the crowded population of the great towns, he knew from his own observation that myriads of the people were living and dying in heathenism, all but the name. He was not the man to labour for the welfare of those afar off, and to leave his own countrymen to perish without an attempt to save them. Hence he strongly desired to establish a mission in England, similar to that which he had so successfully tried in Ireland and Wales. 'Tis true that the organic agencies of Methodism ever have been, and will be, a species of home-mission; but those agencies did not then, and do not now, overtake the great necessities of the times. The Circuit-preachers were all at work, and their very success entailed an amount of pastoral labour which interfered with those aggressive movements which they felt themselves bound to carry on among the partially Christianized or utterly heathen of our crowded cities or scattered hamlets. Coke, therefore, at the Sheffield Conference of 1805, when he was elected president for the second time, had made an urgent appeal for the institution of an extra-Circuit ministry. He had matured his plans, and now pledged himself to do all he could to raise the money to carry them into effect, and proceeded to redeem his promise with such hearty zeal as to be able to mark out eight missionary districts, which are named as Rutlandshire; the country in the vicinity of Thetford; that in the vicinities of Devizes and Collumpton; the country about the Peak of Derbyshire; Ulverstone and its neighbourhood; the country about Taunton; and what is called Meols country, in Lancashire. These appointments were soon followed up by others, for Lincolnshire, Worcestershire, Hereford, and the counties of Suffolk, Essex, Surrey, and Devon.

This was an initiative measure. The Church of England, and the Dissenting bodies, have since those days done good service to their country by the employment of home evangelists, Scripture-readers, and town and city missionaries. But to Dr. Coke belongs the honour of having inaugurated an

agency, the importance of which becomes more apparent every year. The blessing of God so rested on the labours of the men employed in these first essays, that in the course of a few years large Societies were raised, and the wide districts thus cultivated were formed into regular Methodist Circuits; the "home missionaries" being incorporated with the ordinary ministry. But of late there has been felt a deepening conviction of the necessity of reverting to the original principle. Though nearly a thousand in number, the English preachers have work for every hour of every day in fulfilling the claims of pressing duty, while immense multitudes of the people, lying far beyond their possible attentions, are destitute in life and death of the consolations of the Gospel. Since the time of which we are writing, the population of England has doubled, and crime increased fivefold. In the rural districts the people are but scantily provided with religious ordinances, and many of them who attend their parish-churches hear indeed words of truth and grace in the Liturgy, but very uncertain accents from the pulpit, while multitudes attend nowhere. This is more dismally the case in the large towns, where an immense proportion of the lower classes have been long utterly estranged from—and in many instances have never, from their earliest to their latest days, been acquainted with—the ordinances or lessons of religion. "English Christians" they are in name, but worse than heathens in reality. The foreign pagans have a religion, but these people have none. The heathen man holds fast by the sacred traditions of his fathers, and worships at their altars in the temples and in his own house; but, in our crowded English cities, and, more than all, in London itself, are myriads without a creed or a hope,—a mass of lazzaroni fermenting with socialism, atheism, and desperate discontent. Down in their pent-up alleys, their noisome styes, where whole families live in more than brutal degradation, childhood has no care, youth no instruction, except from the base examples of more hardened vice; manhood, no truth, or faith, or hope; old age, no respect for itself, or reverence from others, more

barbarous than the savage, and more felon too. In this condition they have been living and dying unheeded, surrounded by the luxuries of civilization, the paraphernalia of the Church, too well-satisfied with its own self-complaisant virtue to be troubled to look upon their depravity, or to arise for their help in the employment of instrumentalities which, if improved, would long ago have prevented the perdition of the dead, and elevated the state of the living, by making them partakers with ourselves of benefits so freely vouchsafed to us, but designed, through us, for them as well.

Blessed be God! a new feeling of responsibility has of late been throbbing in the bosom of the Christian church for the heathen at home, as well as the heathen abroad. And, of all people, the Methodists ought not to be slow to obey its impulses. Their calling has ever pointed to such enterprises. Jesus Christ, at "the beginning of the Gospel," laid down two principles for the guidance of His servants in the work of evangelization: the one, to commence with those who are nearest to us, "beginning at Jerusalem;" the other, to aim at the renovation of the bases of society, "from the least—to the greatest." If a structure has not a sound foundation at the very bottom, it will never be safe; nor in any nation will the social edifice have the guarantee of permanency, where the masses of the people are left to the influences of our common depravation, without the corrective and converting grace which comes with the Gospel of Christ.

Among the works that press upon the missionary, whether at home or abroad, one is to get the children to school. Cultivate the rising generation, and you insure the improvement of the human race in futurity, and lay "a good foundation against the time to come." A Hebrew Midrash gives a beautiful illustration of this principle, in telling the tradition that, when the Almighty had proclaimed the moral law on Sinai, He required the people of Israel to give the guarantee of their obedience to it in the surrender of living hostages. The people thereupon brought their aged men and elders as their

sponsors; but God would not receive them as such. They then brought their prophets to sustain that character, but with no better acceptance. At last came the fathers and mothers, bearing their children and little ones to the throne of the Most High, who received them with His blessing, as the surest pledge of the nation's obedience in the generations to come. If England's youth are brought to God, a work is done which is prophetic of good to ages unborn.—A second task of the home missionaries is to encourage temperance-societies; a third, to read the Scriptures in the dwellings of the people, to converse and to pray with them; and a fourth, which will be greatly advanced by the preceding operations, to bring them together for preaching.

Dr. Coke was the more encouraged to undertake the home missions from what he witnessed of the good effects attending those already at work in Wales and Ireland. In the latter the brave Ouseley and his chivalrous band of evangelists were penetrating the country in all directions, and meeting everywhere with an attention from the people that excited their ardent hopes. The Roman Catholic population heard them, in spite of the prohibition of the priests, though enforced by horsewhip, penance, or anathema. Sometimes hundreds of them were seen after the sermon kneeling in the street, around the missionary, at the parting prayer. It ought to be recorded to the honour of the parochial clergy, that in general they afforded the preachers their protection and encouragement, sometimes attending their services in person. The military authorities also were quite disposed to grant them opportunities for preaching to the soldiers. In turning over the journals, I see an instance in which the commanding officer, who had been present at the service, stood out at the close, and expressed, on his own and the men's behalf, their acknowledgments for the sermon. And on another occasion the missionary records, that, along with two clergymen and six hundred people, they had a regiment of cavalry, mounted, who formed a semicircle on the outside, and who all took off their

helmets at prayer. "And, blessed be God," says he, "we had floods of tears and many prayers." No doubt such words as the following, which conclude one of their letters to the Doctor, would come to his heart with most cheering exhilaration:—"And now our year is nearly ended; and, though we have gone through much labour of riding and street-preaching, our health is wonderfully preserved, and we have the pleasure of reflecting that many thousands have heard the Gospel this year, who probably never would have heard it but for the Irish mission. And if you had never done any good but what you have done by promoting this, we are persuaded it is an object worthy of your exertion in the cause of the Master whom you love."*

Another good work of this period was the appointment of a missionary to Gibraltar. In the English army for the last hundred years there has always been a gracious leaven of Methodist soldiers; men who either before their enlistment had tasted the good word of God, or who, while engaged in the service of their country, had been brought to a saving knowledge of Christ the King. Many of them, under the great temptations of their manner of life, have been enabled to exemplify in all holy living the sufficiency of grace. A whole history might be written of the piety and heroism of these men, from the days of Dettingen and Fontenoy down to those of Waterloo and the Crimea. Let the reader of Stevens's History of Methodism judge, by the stirring anecdotes he will find in that graphic narrative.† In a regiment stationed at Gibraltar, at the time we are now treating of, there were some fifty of them, and among these two leaders and two local preachers. These good men addressed a memorial to Dr. Coke, representing the great capabilities

* A new epoch in the Methodist English Home Missions has lately opened, and a yet more decided, systematic, and effective organization in this department of public usefulness is being carried out under the energetic superintendence of the Rev. Charles Prest.

† Book iii., chap. i.

of the station as a Methodist mission, and entreating him to use his influence in obtaining a chaplain for them. The case appeared so promising as to warrant an experiment, and the Rev. Mr. M'Mullen was intrusted with the charge. Accompanied by his wife and their little daughter, he embarked for the Rock in the autumn of 1804. A mighty tempest assailed them in the Bay of Biscay, which drove them on the coast of Barbary. In the end of September they crossed the Straits; but the asylum that Gibraltar afforded them was that of the grave. On landing they found the yellow fever raging among the wasted population with a more than usual malignity. The fatal disease had invaded almost every family, and was repeating the horror of Egypt's plague when in every house was the bier of the dead. The child had scarcely breathed the tainted air, when she was seized with the malady. On the 10th of October her anxious father lay down in the fever, and on the 18th he was a corpse. Mrs. M'Mullen had borne up during those days of woe, but, at the hour which ended her husband's life, was struck herself with the shaft of the pestilence, and followed him, in a few days, to the tomb. The orphan child survived, and, as soon as convalescent, was dispatched under suitable care to England. The God of her parents gave her, in His providence, a home in the family of Dr. Adam Clarke. That fatherly man and his excellent wife brought her up as one of their own children, and had the satisfaction of seeing her rise into life well educated, amiable, and pious. She became the wife of a Methodist minister, the Rev. John Rigg, and has lived to see her children the subjects of the Divine blessing in providence and grace.*

The mission to Gibraltar, though commenced with these disastrous omens, was nevertheless destined to accomplish a great amount of good. A succession of preachers have ever

* One of her sons is the Rev. J. H. Rigg, the distinguished author of "Modern Anglican Theology."

since laboured there among the soldiers and more settled inhabitants of that famous mount; and by their close and forcible statements of the truth to crowded congregations of military and civilians,—by the superintendence of a school attended generally by about three hundred children, many of whom would otherwise have grown up untaught and uncared for,—by the preaching of the Gospel in the Spanish language, and the undaunted enterprise of faithful labourers,—by a large circulation of the holy Scriptures among the Spaniards in the mother-country itself,—Gibraltar has been rendered a Bethesda to multitudes, and its rocky heights a beacon of evangelic light. In the humble Methodist chapel there the Englishman has found, or felt sustained within him, the sacred spark of religion; the Moor has heard of the true Prophet of Allah; the Jew has been disabused of his prejudices against the Christian Messiah, and the Papist set free from the bondage of his vain traditions, and brought into the liberty of the sons of God. When Dr. Baird, of America, was on his European tour in 1847, he makes the following reference in his notes on Gibraltar:—"I never had my heart so touched in my life, as when staying here. I attended a service of a hundred and forty boys and youths, connected with the Wesleyan school, to whom a young man was preaching in Spanish."

CHAPTER XXVII.

LAST YEARS IN ENGLAND (CONTINUED).

THESE benevolent activities to promote the welfare of the English military were followed up, some time after, by an effort to introduce the blessings of the Gospel among the thousands of foreign soldiers and sailors who, at that time of war, pent up in prison-ships, formed a melancholy population in some of our great harbours. From the circumstance that the present writer's grandfather, an old naval officer, held then an appointment on board one of those ships at Portsmouth, he used to hear in the family-conversation details of the wretchedness of those unfortunate men, aggravated to despondency, and not unfrequently to suicide, by the hopeless atheism in which they had been trained; which left a deep impression on his heart. And Dr. Coke, whose mind was so alive with generous sensibility, failed not, in his litanies for the Divine mercy "on all prisoners and captives, and all that are desolate and oppressed," to enter into the sorrows and wants of those brave but unhappy men. He was ready to hail with delight, and to aid to the utmost of his power, a Christian movement which just now began to be unfolded, to make them acquainted with Him who can bind up the broken in heart, and set at liberty those who are bound.*

The Rev. William Toase, who is now, in 1860, after the various labours of fifty-six years, the revered minister of the Methodist congregation assembling in the Rue de l'ancienne Comédie in Boulogne-sur-mer, was at that time (in 1810) stationed in the Sevenoaks Circuit, which borders on the river

* See Note 23.

Medway, on which were floating ten prison-ships, containing about seven thousand prisoners. Mr. Toase, who had been habituated to French preaching in Normandy and the Channel Isles, was gratified on receiving an invitation from the commander of one of these ships, the "Glory," to come on board and preach to the prisoners. He seized the earliest opportunity, and on his first visit spent an hour in conversation with them; offering to such as were disposed to receive them some French tracts on religious subjects. On taking leave, he made a proposal that, if agreeable, he would come the next day, and preach the Gospel to them. The offer was accepted with more than mere outside complaisance; and on the following day he stood on the quarter-deck of the "Glory" before a congregation of several hundred men. All heard with respectful attention, many with seriousness, some with tears. A French hymn was attempted, and all bent in prayer. At the close of the service many came round the preacher, and expressed in their own neat way their sense of his attention, and begged he would visit them again. An officer presented him a note requesting the loan of a Bible in Latin, French, or English.

Such was the good beginning of a work the details of which I have not space to record. It spread from one ship to another, and Mr. Toase might have been considered the chaplain of that melancholy fleet. At the following Conference a petition was received, signed by about fifty of the prisoners, chiefly officers, requesting that he might be re-appointed to the same station, for their sakes. The request was heartily complied with. Meanwhile a difficulty had occurred, in the form of a prohibition from the commissary, forbidding his preaching on board the ships. Mr. Butterworth, subsequently member of parliament for Dover, tried in vain to get this prohibition removed. Upon this, Dr. Coke addressed a letter to the Earl of Liverpool, stating the case, and begging his kind interference. The interdict was at once removed; and, by virtue of another correspondence between the Doctor

and Mr. Peel, a wider range was given to the agency by permission granted to the missionaries to preach in all the ships on the Medway, and to extend their ministerial services to the other depôts at Portsmouth, Plymouth, Dartmoor, and Stapleton. Dr. Coke, in his own generous manner, became answerable for the enlarged expenditure. Mr. Toase was now aided by three other preachers, the Rev. Messrs. De Kerpezdron, Le Sueur, and Beal; while to the whole band a most noble field of usefulness was opened, as in those several spots no less than seventy thousand men were pining in captivity. Nor did they labour in vain: a moral and religious impression was made upon a multitude of these poor exiles. They received the word with a willing ear. On board the "Glory," in a code of written laws they had drawn up for their own regulation, one was, "That the Methodist ministers be respected and encouraged." It was found that a multitude of them could not read. When offered books, the reply was, "*Nous sommes les enfans de la révolution, et nous ne savons pas lire.*" To meet this defect, the preachers established ten schools among them, the expense being borne by the subscriptions of some friends in London, and about three hundred men learned to read the Bible. Sometimes, when on occasion of a cartel a party of them returned to France, each man went home with a Testament and some good books. They took farewell of the preachers with a gush of grateful feeling. "How can we forget your labours? When you preached to us the word of salvation, it seemed like the voice of mercy, and was a source of consolation to our hearts. We shall feel it a duty to publish to our families and friends what the Methodists have done for us in prison." Such were some of their expressions, which I copy from the authentic document before me. There are men still living who retain to this day, in their old age, a lively recollection of the aid thus given them in the gloom and grief of their captivity. I remember, when assistant to the Rev. William Toase, in Paris, walking with him one day in the Faubourg St. Honoré, when

a French gentleman, wearing the cross of the Legion of Honour, came up and expressed his great pleasure in meeting him. When, after some pleasant and cordial talk, he had gone away, Mr. Toase remarked, "That man, sir, was one of the prisoners of war, to whom I used to preach on board the 'Glory.'"

Here are some sentences from a letter of acknowledgment addressed by a meeting of French officers to the Missionary Committee, which will represent in their own words, more effectually than I can do in mine, the sense they entertained of those good men's labours :—

"YOUR Society, in sending on board our prison-ships the zealous missionaries, Messrs. Toase and Kerpezdron, who, in administering to us the consolations of religion, have added more than once to our temporal aid, (such as clothes to those of our unhappy countrymen on board the 'Samson,' who were naked,) has a claim to our warmest thanks. This has come to our knowledge by those of our countrymen who have lately come from that ship to the 'Brunswick.' By this reunion of the officers we have obtained this information, without which we should have remained ignorant of it, by reason of the impenetrable secrecy which exists between one prison-ship and another. The wise exhortations of these ministers of the word of God, which have frequently given comfort to the unhappy prisoner at the very last period of despair, have given you an eternal right to the gratitude of all the prisoners of war, and especially of the officers. We are all sensible of the degree of courage which was necessary, for men who were not constrained by any authority, to penetrate into these dungeons of sorrow, amidst the infected air we breathe, the multitude of unhappy victims crowded into them, and the various diseases to which they are subject, and by which many have been hurried to the grave,—to induce them to come and spend whole days among us, and expose themselves to the same diseases that afflict us:.....nothing but Christian charity

could produce such an effect.....We have the honour to be, gentlemen, with the highest consideration and respect,

“Your very obliged servants,

“LE BERTRE, Colonel, and Chevalier of
the Empire.

“VATABLE, Colonel, &c.

“*On board the ‘Brunswick,’*
Medway, Sept. 6th, 1812.”

When, on the termination of the war, these thousands of Frenchmen returned to their own country, may we not hope that many of them carried impressions on their hearts which would lead to everlasting good? We have no doubt, too, that in many a neighbourhood in France the tale which these men had to tell about the worthy preachers of the prison-ships would tend to open the way for that encouraging welcome which the Methodist missionaries found among the people, when Toase, Hawtrey, and Cook, soon after the peace, commenced those labours in that country which have led to the establishment of a Methodist Church in France.

Of this good work, so dear from the beginning to Dr. Coke, a history has been written by Mr. Toase, in a recital of toils and successes of which he might have said, but for his Christian diffidence, “*Et quorum pars magna fui.*” By the Divine blessing on his zealous care, and on the devotion of the faithful band of Missionaries who worked with him, and still work, congregations and societies have been raised both in the north and south of France, among whom a pure apostolical Christianity is exerting its beneficial influences. Among his colleagues Mr. Toase found a most energetic auxiliary in the late Dr. Charles Cook, who spent the larger portion of his holy and exemplary life in entire consecration to the cause of Christ in France and Switzerland.* Nor ought I to omit, that the Rev. William Toase, during his long residence in

* Died at Lausanne, in 1858, honoured by all who knew him.

France, has not only been instrumental in thus promoting the diffusion of the Gospel among the people of that country, but also in establishing places of worship for the accommodation of the English who as sojourners or visitors are found in such large numbers in that land. At Calais and Boulogne, at Caen and Rouen, as well as in the metropolis, our countrymen have gladly hereby availed themselves of a Gospel sermon from a Methodist pulpit, for many years. At Paris, the English chapel in the Rue Royale St. Honoré is well known, and well loved too, by thousands of Christians of various religious communions, who have found during their residence in that capital a most acceptable retreat within its humble but venerated walls. Craving permission for such a reference, let me remark that when I joined Mr. Toase as his curate, in 1844, I found he had drawn around his pulpit in that place a congregation which might have been pronounced unique. French people, English, Scotch, Irish, and Americans, with now and then a sprinkling of other nations, all gathered to hear from his lips the truths of salvation. Among them were persons of noble rank, both English and French; and the *élite* of the American families in Paris stately attended his ministry. Of the latter number, in my time, was that of the American chargé d'affaires at the court of the Tuileries; and I mention it for the purpose of recording an opinion which, in a conversation with him one day, that honourable person expressed to me about Mr. Toase. "His ministry," said he, "is commanding in its influence, not only from its scriptural and catholic breadth, but for its worldly wisdom. In listening to him, I sometimes hear a remark on the practical affairs of life, which comes to me with the force of an inspiration." This good servant of Jesus Christ has the satisfaction in his latest years of witnessing, in the steady though toilsome progress of a cause which he and his companions have been able to found and build up, that which will promote the real welfare of the French people more than a thousand of their revolutions. The good thus effected sur-

vives, and will survive, the fashion of their changing systems. Since the first Methodist Society was established in that country, five national convulsions have raised, and then demolished, as many forms of political power. But this unpretending cause, invigorated with the principles of "the kingdom which cannot be moved," abides and grows with the years of time. The great work will endure, because it is of God ; and, if days of calamity yet await the impenitence and infidelity of France, the good now being done among a multitude of the people will be found the germ of a great return in the calmer future ; like the seed that the husbandman sows broadcast amid the autumnal gales, which is destined to yield a plenteous harvest when the tempests of the winter have gone by.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LAST YEARS IN ENGLAND (CONCLUDED).

REVERTING to the career of Dr. Coke, we see him next engaged in measures for the introduction of the Gospel among the tribes of the African continent. The Methodist preachers had long waited for an opening to the populations of those unexplored countries. So early as 1778 the Conference at Leeds had a long discussion on the possibility of a commencement, even then; and, though the execution of the design was unavoidably delayed, the very discussion about it was good; and, as Mr. Benson, who was present, has recorded, "the prayers which followed were manifestly attended with a great blessing, the Lord being present of a truth."

Was it then that the quondam curate of South-Petherton, who sat with them in Conference for the first time, lit his missionary torch? However that be, the zeal with which he soon proved himself so richly inspired led him to desire earnestly from year to year the time when to Africa's oppressed children in their foreign captivity the year of release should come, and to her troubled homes the message of the Gospel bring its tidings of joy.

And now the great hindrance which had hitherto paralysed all such good dispositions, like the spell of an incubus, was passing away. England had openly renounced and repudiated the slave-trade. An English missionary could now tell the people about the liberty of the children of God, and invite them to partake of it, without the look of a dissembler. As the representative of a people who continued to prey upon them and their children to supply the slave-markets of the West, it would have been in vain for him to go at all. What

would be the use of bringing them a Bible in one hand, while they could suspect that there remained concealed in the other the price of their flesh and bones? But Wilberforce and Clarkson, with their true-hearted supporters, had so far triumphed, that the legislature of Great Britain had stamped the trade as felonious, and given to the civilized world the guarantee of sincerity by putting the coasts infested by the slave-dealing powers under the protection of her flag.

On the great western cape of the African continent is a territory coasting the sea, of about three hundred square miles, which in the year 1787 had been purchased by an English corporation as a locality for a settlement of Negroes who had served during the American war in British ships, but for whom no suitable employment had been found after the peace. The settlement, which took the name of Sierra-Leone, from a river so-called which flows along its border,* was, upon the abolition of the slave-trade, made over to the crown, and fixed upon by the government as a proper area for a colony, to be composed of such Negroes as from time to time should be rescued from slave-vessels by the British cruisers. The project succeeded. Free-town was founded, and became, in its way, a metropolis; and a multitude of sable people, of many inland tribes, gave to it and the bordering tracts of country a large and increasing population.

Towards this region Dr. Coke had for some time directed his serious regard. He there saw a kind of normal school of African ethnology; a multitude of inland nations sending thither, by the leadings of Providence, their representatives, to be instructed in the truths of the Gospel. This remarkable characteristic of the colony was attended by another: the English language was becoming more and more a current medium among the people. And, lastly, a society of Christians already existed there; for some of the original settlers were Methodist Negroes. Here, then, was the spot on which

* Or rather, from a ridge of mountains which rises near the southern bank of the river.

he would operate, if he could, as the base of yet wider undertakings.

In proceeding to make the experiment, he published in 1808 an appeal to the preachers for volunteers for the work. "Africa," says he, "claims our care. Now the great friends of liberty have abolished the infernal trade, and are labouring to establish an innocent commerce between us and the Negro land, the friends of the Gospel, among whom we may also rank those patrons of the human race, should stretch every nerve to improve the glorious opportunity. But who will be the man? who will go upon that arduous mission on the sacrifice of his faith? He will not have wholly to lay a foundation. A little Christian society will receive him with open arms,* and he will have many heathen tribes within his reach. If, therefore, there be a Christian hero among us, who will venture on this great undertaking, let him inform the committee and myself, that due measures may be taken before next Conference, that with their consent he may get to Africa a little before the commencement of the winter after next."

A year or two passed without any response to these appeals; but in the spring of 1811, while Coke was in the west of England, he met in the Helstone Circuit with a preacher named George Warren, then stationed upon that ground. Mr. Warren had been feeling much about Africa, and could endure no longer delay to seek the good of its benighted races. In a communication with Dr. Coke, he therefore offered himself as a volunteer, declaring that "for a long season his mind had been so deeply impressed that it was his duty to go, that he would prefer the station to any other."

Just after, another proffer came from the superintendent of Dewsbury, proposing three young men, Hadley, Rayner, and Hurst, who had also freely offered themselves for the coast of Africa, from the constraining feelings which had

* They had long importuned Dr. Coke to send them a Missionary.

become irresistible in their souls. After some preparatory training, to qualify these brethren for the scholastic duties to which they were to be more especially devoted, Dr. Coke met them in Liverpool, and saw them embark on the 21st of September.

They reached Sierra-Leone in the middle of November, and received a favourable welcome from the governor. Mr. Warren entered on his ministry, and his companions gathered large numbers of Negro children into their schools; and thus commenced a work which has continued in beneficial operation ever since. Good Mr. Warren fell a victim to the climate in a few months; but, though a similar fate has overtaken many other devoted servants of Christ who have volunteered successively for that mission, the work has still gone on. At the present time there are four missionaries in that part of the country, with more than six thousand members, who worship in thirty chapels, which are also attended by near twenty thousand hearers. About five thousand children crowd the schools, which are now supplied with teachers educated at a native training-institution under the care of the Missionaries.

This was the beginning of that Methodist agency in Africa which has since spread to many other parts of the continent; on the Gambia, on the Gold Coast, to Ashanti, and other countries of the west; in the south, in the wide regions round the Cape of Good Hope, among the Kaffirs, Hottentots, Fingoes, Bechuanas, Zulus, and other tribes, who are coming in large numbers out of the shadows of heathenism into the sunshine of civilization and religion. The English colonists, as well as many of the Dutch population, have greatly profited by the ministry of the missionaries, of whom some eighty are at work, Englishmen and converted natives now having part in the same office and ministry, together with a goodly band of native catechists and teachers. Fifteen thousand native converts, united in the fellowship of the Christian church, and fifteen thousand

children blessed with a useful and godly education, are proving that their labours have not been in vain in the Lord. Contrasted with the state of things in that quarter of the world half a century ago, these wondrous signs of Providence, multiplied by like benedictions on the enterprises of the Church of England missions, and those of the Moravian and London Societies, in many other spots in the African lands, betoken the sure approach of the day when, redeemed and renewed, the tribes of Ethiopia shall stretch out their hands unto God.

The interests of the English Connexion claimed, too, the time and strength of Dr. Coke in these last years. As the secretary of the Conference, and a constant itinerant among the Circuits, he was intimately conversant with the entire system, to its minutest details. The preachers always had in him an experienced counsellor and a loving friend; and when the liberties, not only of Methodism, but those of the Nonconformist churches in general, were so gloomily threatened by the infatuated measure * proposed by Lord Sidmouth in 1811, the Doctor was among the foremost to unite in a constitutional opposition to the nefarious project, which not only nullified it, but made it the occasion of ultimate advantage to the cause of religious liberty in England, by leading to a revision of the Toleration Act, by which its old provisions were more surely confirmed, and new privileges, adapted to the advancement of the times, secured to ourselves and to our children.

But time, meanwhile, with its stealthy tread, was leading this good man onward to the limits of his pilgrimage; and among the tokens which forewarned him was the removal, one by one, of those who had been his companions in the way.

* Infatuated, because perilous both to Church and State. Mere worldly policy ought to have dictated the expediency of protecting, rather than seeking to cripple or destroy, those Christian agencies without which, in their influence on the masses of the people, neither the altar nor the throne in those times would have been safe. See Note 24.

On the 25th of January, this year, (1811,) his beloved partner sank under a malady against which no skill or help availed. In her he lost the companion of his later years, a munificent benefactress, and a tender wife. In committing her remains to the repose of the tomb, near those of his father and mother, at the Priory church in Brecon, he raised a costly monument to her memory with the following inscription :—

“Near this place lie the remains of PENELOPE GOULDING COKE, daughter of Joseph Smith, esquire, late an eminent attorney at Bradford in Wiltshire, and wife of Thomas Coke, LL.D., of the University of Oxford. She was born at Bradford in 1762, was married in April, 1805, and died in London on the 25th of January, 1811. She was a woman in whom the common virtues which adorn her sex were eclipsed by those more exalted graces that ornament the Christian character. Through life she was subject to many bodily afflictions, which would have taught her by painful experience to feel for the distresses of others, if she had not learned the same lesson from a better Instructor. Although her fortune was ample, it was unequal to her liberality ; and even this fell short of her ardent desire to do good. Humility, patience, resignation, and gratitude were the constant companions of her latter years ; during which time she fed the poor by her bounty, and instructed the rich by her example. Her constant communion with God rewarded her with present peace ; and, in the full assurance of faith in the atonement of her Redeemer, and the sanctifying influences of His blessed Spirit, opened before her a prospect of everlasting felicity.”

Dr. Coke was greatly broken down by this stroke of Providence. To depict the anguish of his soul would be an improper attempt. There is a sanctity in such grief which should not be intruded on. But some idea of the exercises of his mind may be gathered from his own words in a letter written to a valued friend, the Rev. Thomas Roberts, some three months after the trial had befallen him. It is dated from Helstone, in Cornwall :—

“I am very much obliged to you for your third kind letter, inviting me to your house in Carmarthen. Business in London obliges me to break my western tour, and return. This I do with reluctance; for I think I was never so owned of God in preaching as I have been since coming this time into this county.....The Lord is also very gracious to me now in another respect. For the last three nights I have slept pretty well. The last night I slept very well, after a great deal of ministerial duty yesterday. But, O my dear friend, I get daily into the very furnace of affliction. You can fully sympathize with me: and I met with one at Falmouth the other day, (Mr. Wildbore, a Dissenting minister,) who, on the loss of his first wife and son, did for nine months, I do believe, wade through deeper waters than I have done myself.

“Do you believe that the spirits of departed pious friends are sometimes permitted to visit us? Are they ever allowed to be guardian spirits?—But of all these things we shall converse most freely, *Deo volente*, when I have the pleasure of visiting you.

“But that which will, I am sure, give my friend the greatest satisfaction, is, that my soul, I am certain, is brought nearer to God by this deep affliction. I am quite astonished that I have not broke my heart, or become deranged. I think a longer stay in London, at the time I set off for Cornwall, would have been fatal. I now understand that the Lord scourgeth every son whom He receiveth; a subject which I never preached upon, and hardly knew how to preach upon till now. But now I am fully satisfied that in very faithfulness He has afflicted me.”

In another letter to Mr. Bruce, written a month later, he says: “I am just come from the west. I have been flying from myself by travelling 1,500 miles in ten weeks, but preaching strenuously, and, I bless God, rejoicing in His Divine Majesty. I never knew what grief was till now. O, that blessed woman! But I shall be with her again, brother, in the same mansion of glory to all eternity. The whole world

has vanished from my view. I have hardly had strength of mind to put pen to paper for eleven weeks; but I have been very happy in the pulpit. My love to Mr. Atmore, the preachers, and their good wives. Pray for your faithful but afflicted brother."

It thus appears that, like many other good ministers in the same circumstances, he found a kind of refuge from himself in the zealous fulfilment of the public duties of his office.

While touching on Dr. Coke's private and domestic history, I have only to observe further, that, some time after the death of Mrs. Penelope Coke, the Doctor entered the marriage state a second time by a union with Miss Ann Loxdale, a lady of good family in Liverpool. On this step, which he had undoubtedly a full right to take, no remarks are necessary here. These phenomena of the human heart are too recondite for an ordinary man like me to presume to analyse. However strange it might seem that the anguish of bereavement in the dissolution of a first marriage may so speedily be succeeded by the consolations of another, we know that examples of the fact occur full often, and in cases in which the first pure love for those departed loses none of its strength, even while blended with the new-born affection for another object. Into these mysteries, however, it is not my province to enter. The case with Dr. Coke appears to have been this :—He was advanced in years, and without a relative. The experience of domestic life already enjoyed had given it a charm which made his present desolation the more trying. He naturally looked forward to the period when, sinking under the infirmities of age, he would need the presence and sympathy of one more than a mere stranger; and in Miss Loxdale he thought might be found the help that he desired. This excellent lady, who herself had passed the meridian of life, possessed every endowment of mind and character that would make her worthy of his choice. She combined the adornments of a refined education with the graces of religion; and in habits of activity in the service of God, in visiting the sick, instructing the

ignorant, and building up her fellow-believers in their holy faith, she had long given proof of being one of Christ's disciples indeed. A former biographer, in referring to this match, states that the friends of the lady "disapproved of the connexion." Such, however, was not exactly the case. In a letter from her to Mrs. Fletcher, of Madeley, now before me, she says that the giving of her hand to Dr. Coke was an event in her history for which she would have to praise God in time and eternity, and adds : "All my relations, except my dear sister, were highly pleased. She, precious jewel, felt too deeply to be willing to give me up : but I doubt not, now I am removed, the Lord will give her resignation to His will, and pleasure in seeing and hearing of me, engaged in the work and situation I have made choice of. For my own part, I shall esteem it an unspeakable privilege if I can watch over the health and contribute to the comfort of so highly esteemed and truly laborious a servant of Christ and His church, as my beloved husband." But if among any of her friends the marriage was not looked upon with unalloyed complacency, the principal objection arose from her own delicate state of health, which in their judgment unfitted her for the unsettled life to which she would be liable as the wife of so restless a traveller as the Doctor. And such fears, if they existed, were too well grounded. Within a few days from the first anniversary of her wedding she too passed away in death.

Two years after, while on his last voyage, pensively dwelling on the memories of the past, her bereaved husband thus traced his recollections of her lovely character :—

"Her mental endowments, though highly polished by education, were graced by a deep humility which would have rendered her amiable without her superior talents. Her conversion to God at an early period taught her to ascribe her salvation wholly to grace, and induced her to exchange the pleasures of the world for the permanent enjoyments of religion. Upwards of thirty years she had continued her connexion with the Methodists, to whom she was united with an

attachment that death only could dissolve. Among them may be found many witnesses of her eminent Christian virtues, as well as abundant monuments of her holy zeal for the salvation of souls. Having long experienced that state of Christian perfection which it is the privilege of the faithful to enjoy, her love towards God became so refined, as she advanced in years, that her removal from earth to heaven was little more than a gentle translation."

Once more alone, and yet not alone, Coke felt that his domestic history had ended. The world must be his home, and his meat and drink to do the will of Him who had sent him. With the presage that these bereavements had been designed to leave him the more untrammelled for the tasks that might remain, he dedicated himself afresh TO GOD ALONE. Henceforth he would think, preach, write, and labour more fully than ever for one object,—the extension of His kingdom among men. This was but the renewal, or repeated recognition, of vows long years before registered on high, never for one day forgotten, and to what extent fulfilled even these imperfect pages may lead us in forming the judgment. We have seen that for this sublime object he had been long accustomed to consecrate time and talents, strength, property, and all. As to property, he had sacrificed his own fortune, and, with her full desire, much already of that once possessed by his first wife. His yearly subscription to the missionary cause might have been called princely; but, in addition to that, the exigencies of the cause itself made continual demands on his resources, and to these cases of necessity he gave willingly, and sometimes to the extent of hundreds of pounds. I know that so early as the year 1794 he had already given £917 to the missions. He had also advanced £1,250 for chapel-building in the West Indies, which at that time (1794) he freely forgave. Ever after, his conduct was distinguished by the same magnificent spirit. But his money was not the only thing given; the man gave himself. He traversed the world to make the children of the earth hear the tidings of redeem-

ing mercy ; and through his efforts, directly or indirectly, vast multitudes had heard, and heard to salvation. In England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, his agency and influence had greatly contributed to build up, and invigorate for a world-wide beneficence, the religious communion to which he had pledged the devotion of his life ; while by his successful appeals in private and public in creating funds for the work, and amid the dangers and privations of foreign travel as the pioneer or the companion of the missionary, he had carried the institutions of the Gospel to the broad regions of the western continent, from Nova-Scotia and Newfoundland in the bleak north, to the southern savannas of Georgia and Carolina. At the lofty gate of the Mediterranean, and on the French frontier of the European continent, a work had been commenced germinant of good for coming ages. At Sierra-Leone a position had been won which would serve as a pivot for missionary operations far and wide among the sable nations of Africa ; while in the Western Indies, where myriads of that dark race, made spiritually free even in their captivity,

“ Having heard the glad sound,
Had liberty found
Through the blood of the Lamb,”

he saw a well-organized ministry fulfilling in labour and martyrdom their service to God and man, in relieving the pains of those outcasts of humanity, uplifting them from their debasement, and preparing them for the day when, at the fiat of Providence, they would take their place among freemen, and be numbered with the nations of the saved. In movements like these who does not trace the footsteps of an apostle of God ? Whose eyes so filmed by prejudice, or blinded by the passions of the world, as to be unable to discern the seal of the Divinity upon labours so benefic and enduring ? For these massive charities are proving themselves perennial. Herein was his Father glorified, that he should bear much fruit, and that his fruit should remain. The mere work of

man fades and passes away, but the work of God abides. Diplomatsists have met in their congresses, armies have fallen in the horrid butchery of battle, and kingdoms drained their resources, for objects which have proved ephemeral as the life of a moth ; but the loving designs of this self-denying evangelist of Jesus Christ have accomplished results which multiply with the generations of time, and will gladden the ages of eternity.

We are now to consider the last great effort of his life, which gives a crowning sublimity to the whole. He wished to dedicate his final days to the diffusion of the Gospel among the multitudinous nations of the Oriental world. Toil-worn, bent with years, but unsubdued in purpose, faith, charity ; and bearing into the shadows of the evening the flame of the zeal which inspired him in the morning and the noon of life ; he gathers round him a band of men like-minded, and departs with them for the East. Servant of God, well done ! Thy resolves and vows have come up before Him who hath said, "It is enough." Go forth, then, on thy distant way ; but it takes thee not to India, but home to heaven. The labourer's day hastens to the shade ; the sun stoops on the sea, and the waves bear thee to rest.

BOOK III.

REPOSE.

CHAPTER I.

THE LAST DESIGN.

CHRISTIAN men, instructed by the oracles of truth, discern in the developments of Providence the progressive fulfilment of a merciful purpose to bring all the kindreds of mankind into unity and blessedness under the sceptre of their Redeemer. The disclosures of revelation have their counterpart and confirmation in facts which show that the great events which constitute the history of our world have hitherto tended to promote this end, in the diffusion of truth, and the elevation of the moral and social life of mankind. The dispensations of Heaven toward our own country have an evident bearing on such a purpose. In the power she has won, and the influence she exerts over them, England has been plainly designated to be the mediatrix of Christianity among the nations of the world. We have been intrusted with the guardianship of the ignorant, to instruct them, and of the enslaved, to make them free. The millions of the Orient, who have been brought into political and social fraternity with ourselves, are intrusted to our care, not for our aggrandizement merely, but for their salvation. This is the great idea which enlightened men among us more and more deeply feel in relation to India and the East at large. No doubt, Divine Providence, in placing so many of those fair regions under

the tutelage of England, enriched her with one of the choicest prizes of the earth. The very name of India has become synonymous with gold and diamonds; its riches and magnificence are not only a fixed belief among the moderns, but have been a proverb of the ancients. "The gold of that land is good; there also is bdellium and the onyx-stone." The old poet-geographer, in his description of the Indian Eldorado, represents as the ordinary employment of the inhabitants the gathering from the exhaustless treasures of nature furnished to their hand whatever precious things the rest of mankind hear of at a distance, or think of as next to unattainable :—

"Some the rocks descend,
And from the mine extract the latent gold.
Others repair to rivers deep, and plunge
To find the beryl flaming in its bed,
Or glittering diamond. Oft the jasper's found,
Green, but pellucid; the topaz, too, of ray
Serene and pleasant; last, the lovely amethyst,
Blending the shades of purple. The rich soil,
Wash'd by a thousand rivers on all sides,
Pours on the natives wealth without control." *

Now these regions of real as well as fabled wealth, with stores of "gold and silver, and of precious stones, and pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and of every vessel of ivory, and precious wood, and brass, of iron, and marble, and of cinnamon, and spikenard, and perfumes, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and wheat, and cattle, and horses, and chariots, and bodies and souls of men," †—these vast countries of the "morning-land," peopled by antique races who had attained the same amount of civilization that they now possess, long before Rome was founded in the Italian woods, but sunk in heathen darkness, debasement, and ruin,—have become, in the wondrous ways of God, identified with the territory of the British empire. And herein will be made manifest His mercy to them, as well as His bounty to

* *Dionysii Geog.*

† Rev. xviii.

us; that is to say, if England recognise and fulfil her duty, in affording them those grand advantages which have contributed to make her a free, refined, and happy, so far as a Christian, nation.

To contribute an effectual and personal assistance to the incipient efforts about that time in movement to promote the true evangelization of India, was the last solemn purpose of Dr. Coke's life.

The wish to be so employed was not a thing of yesterday. It was one of the early impulses of his regenerate life, and had never left him. With his soul he had desired it in the thoughts of the night; he had talked of it in the converse of the day; he had given it expression in prayers at the mercy-seat of God; and it had become a fixed assurance, that, with or without his own personal co-operation, he should be an instrument in advancing the triumphs of Christianity among the heathens of Asia.

Keeping this object steadily in view, he had watched the course of events which tended every year to give Great Britain a firmer hold on India, and such openings of Providence as seemed to favour his hopes. He seized, too, every opportunity of obtaining all information that would be of practical use in the accomplishment of the enterprise he had at heart. Thus, so far back as 1784, we find him carrying on a correspondence with a gentleman who at that time resided in Bengal, the result of which he published in the *Arminian Magazine* for 1792; and, subsequently, with another, then engaged in mercantile pursuits at Madras, who not only replied to his inquiries, but promised a liberal contribution towards the commencement of a mission. With the same view he opened a communication with that excellent gentleman, the late Lieutenant-Colonel Sandys, from whose extensive experience of Indian life he derived some valuable counsels.* The colonel, at Dr. Coke's request, drew up a number

* See Note 25.

of memoranda for the use of the Missionary Committee. To another highly valued friend, Mr. Morton, father-in-law of the illustrious Morrison of China, and of the late Dr. Joseph Beaumont, he was indebted in the same way for counsels derived from the stores of practical knowledge which that gentleman had acquired by a long professional career in India. The return of Dr. Claudius Buchanan to England also afforded Coke several occasions of personal intercourse with that distinguished divine, which enabled him, more than all the others had done, to mould his project into a working form.

But all this time a great political obstacle, unknown in the other missions in which he had been engaged, prevented him from taking action. The Anglo-government of the East, vested in the East-India Company, had proved itself steadfastly opposed to the evangelization of the Hindoos.

It is of no use at the present hour, when the folly, not to say the wickedness, of this antichristian policy has been made so painfully evident in the events of the years just past, to dwell upon the subject. The fact may be stated with the fewest words. The Redeemer of the world commanded His ministers to disciple all nations, and to preach the Gospel to every creature. But the Leadenhall-street Company in this great case put in their veto, and said, in effect, You shall do no such thing. The Company thus proved itself a stumbling-block in the way of India's evangelization, and Providence has removed it out of the way. Happy, if the stolid prejudices which characterized that form of Indian administration, in matters religious, shall descend along with it to oblivion.

Dr. Coke's desire to be instrumental in promoting the cause of Christianity in the East, stirring in his soul for so many years, had now become irrepressible. But the financial inability of the Methodist Connexion to embark in any effective measure in that direction, on the one hand, and the resolute opposition it would have to encounter from the Anglo-Indian government, were it ever so able, on the other,

convinced him that he had scarcely any ground of hope of attaining his object in connexion with Methodist agency. With the full force of this ever-baffled desire agitating his mind, he became acquainted with the fact that the government had begun to entertain the project of establishing a bishopric in India; and it occurred to him at once, that, could he be appointed to the see, he should be put in possession of a power to gratify his ardent wishes, and to accomplish, with advantages which such a position alone could give him, the great design for which he lived. The impulse, too strong to be resisted, was at once yielded to. Without conferring with flesh and blood, he took the decisive step of offering himself as a candidate for the bishopric.

We shall give the Doctor the advantage of explaining this affair in his own words, which we are enabled to do from an ample statement he made about it, in a letter at the time, to the late Mr. Wilberforce. In this important document, for the publication of which we are indebted to the Bishop of Oxford,* Dr. Coke makes the following ingenuous disclosures :—

“A subject, which appears to me of great moment, lies much upon my mind; yet it is of such a delicate nature that I cannot venture to open my mind upon it to any one of whose candour, piety, delicacy, and honour I have not the highest opinion. Such a character I do indubitably esteem you, sir; and, as such, I will run the risk of opening my whole heart to you upon the point.

“For at least twelve years the interests of our Indian empire have lain very near my heart. In several instances I have made attempts to open a way for missions in that country, and even for my going over there myself. But everything proved abortive.....

“The Lord has been pleased to fix me for about thirty-seven years on a point of great usefulness. My influence in

* Correspondence of William Wilberforce, vol. ii., p. 256.

the large Wesleyan Connexion, the introduction and superintendence of our missions in different parts of the globe, and the wide sphere opened to me for the preaching of the Gospel to almost innumerable large and attentive congregations, have opened to me a very extensive field for usefulness. And yet I could give up all for India. Could I but close my life in being the means of raising a spiritual church in India, it would satisfy the utmost ambition of my soul here below.

“I am not so much wanted in our Connexion at home as I was. Our Committee of Privileges, as we term it, can watch over the interests of the body, in respect to laws and government, as well in my absence as if I were with them. Our Missionary Committee in London can do the same in respect to missions; and my absence would only make them feel their duty more incumbent upon them. Auxiliary committees through the nation (which we have now in contemplation) will amply supply my place in respect to raising money. There is nothing to influence me much against going to India, but my extensive sphere for preaching the Gospel. But this, I do assure you, sir, sinks considerably in my calculation, in comparison of the high honour (if the Lord was to confer it upon me in His providence and grace) of beginning or reviving a genuine work of religion in the immense regions of Asia.

“Impressed with these views, I wrote a letter about a fortnight ago to the Earl of Liverpool.....After an introduction, drawn up in the most delicate manner in my power, I took notice of the observations made by Lord Castlereagh in the House of Commons, concerning a religious establishment in India connected with the Established Church at home. I then simply opened my situation in the Wesleyan Connexion, as I have stated to you above. I enlarged on the earnest desire I had of closing my life in India; observing, that if his Royal Highness the Prince Regent and the government should think proper to appoint me their bishop in India, I should most cheerfully and gratefully accept of the offer.....I observed that I should, in case of my appointment to the

episcopacy of India, return most fully into the bosom of the Established Church, and do everything in my power to promote its interests; and would submit to all such restrictions, in the fulfilment of my office, as the government and the bench of bishops at home should think necessary;—that my prime motive was to be useful to the Europeans in India; and that my second, though not the least, was to introduce the Christian religion among the Hindoos, by the preaching of the Gospel, and perhaps also by the establishment of schools.....

“When I was in some doubt this morning whether I ought to take the liberty of writing to you, my mind became determined, on my being informed about three hours ago that, in a letter received from you by Mr. Hey, you observed that the generality of the House of Commons were set against granting anything of an imperative kind to the Dissenters or Methodists in favour of sending missionaries to India.

“I am not conscious that the least degree of ambition influences me in this business. I possess a fortune of about £1,200 a year, which is sufficient to bear my travelling expenses, and to enable me to make many charitable donations. I have lost two dear wives, and am now a widower. Our leading friends through the Connexion receive me, and treat me with the utmost respect and hospitality. I am quite surrounded with friends who greatly love me. But India still cleaves to my heart. I sincerely believe that my strong inclination to spend the remainder of my life in India originates in the Divine will, whilst I am called upon to use the secondary means to obtain the end.”

In remarking on this transaction, we must confess that it seems to betray on the part of Dr. Coke a want of sound judgment. A little calm reflection would have made it plain to him that his overture could not be entertained. He could not expect that the government, taking into consideration the antecedents of his past life, would advance a man who had spent so many years as an effective promoter of the interests

of Nonconformity over the heads of other clergymen who had all their lives been steadfast to the discipline of the Established Church. He expected, indeed, that the good feelings which the leading men in the king's ministry entertained for him personally would incline them to overlook his ecclesiastical delinquencies, and to further the worthy objects which they knew he had at heart. He says to Wilberforce, lower down in the letter,—“I have reason to believe that Lord Eldon had, (indeed, I am sure of it,) and probably now has, an esteem for me. Lord Sidmouth, I do think, loves me. Lord Castlereagh once expressed to Mr. Alexander Knox, then his private secretary in Ireland, his very high regard for me: since that time I have had an interview with his lordship in London. I have been favoured, on various occasions, with public and private interviews with Lord Bathurst,” &c. All true enough; but those men stood in a relation to the State-Church which would not allow them to excite the dissatisfaction of a powerful party, in order to gratify their private feelings towards Dr. Coke, however kindly.

But a more severe use has been made of the disclosures in this letter, since its publication in the Wilberforce correspondence, in founding upon them a charge against Dr. Coke of worldly ambition, and of disloyalty to the Methodist cause.*

As to the first, we should not forget that a similar accusation has been not infrequently made against some of the greatest benefactors of mankind, and that Dr. Coke shares this reproach in the best of company. We grant that he was moved by a spirit of ambition: but of what kind? The ambition to do all the good he could possibly achieve in the

* A Letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, by Edward B. Pusey, D.D. Third edition.

A Letter to the Rev. Edward B. Pusey, D.D., Regius Professor of Hebrew in the University of Oxford; being a Vindication of the Tenets and Character of the Wesleyan Methodists against his Misrepresentations and Censures. By Thomas Jackson. Fourth edition, Nason, 1842.—In this most valuable disquisition the matter before us is impartially and thoroughly canvassed. (Pp. 43–55.)

life he was living for eternity. In this respect he stands out as an example to all the servants of God. Who is he that condemneth? But to accuse him of the sordid meanness of worldly ambition is to violate all the convictions which come home to the heart of every one who gains an acquaintance with the true history of his life. The record is before us : let the reader judge.

Equally unfounded we consider the charge of treason against the cause of Methodism. What is the moving principle of Methodism, but the earnest aspiration and effort of good men after a more full realization of Christianity, in its spirit in their own bosoms, and in its saving effects in the world around them? The agencies of this cause are designed to accomplish, not the aggrandizement of a sect, but the salvation of a world. To this grand purpose all other considerations give way ; and while seeking to promote it, which, in the present case, Coke believed he could do more effectually by the sacrifice of his own personal affections and partialities in divorcing himself from an intimate companionship with Methodism in its outward circumstances, he would be still acting in harmony with its spirit, and in fulfilling its supreme designs be never so much a true Methodist as then. His personal love for the Wesleyan communion had undergone no decline. We are sure of this from his own simple statements. To leave it was to forsake what had long been the home and rest of his heart and life. No object but one of transcendent importance could bring him to consent to such an immolation ; but such a claim he thought to be now upon him, and he found himself willing for the kingdom of heaven's sake to make the sacrifice. I presume we shall all be disposed to admit that one's own particular church does not shut up within itself the entire monopoly of all revealed and actual religion ; and that Christianity in its universal bearings has a higher claim upon a man's devotion than the interests of a single communion, however endeared to his personal feelings. Beyond this concession we ask no more to insure for Dr.

Coke, in the present instance, not only the acquittal, but the admiration, of all enlightened men.

But the change, after all, was not to be. He was spared the distress attending on the disruption of ties so ancient and endeared. The door of the State-Church was closed against him, but Providence was about to open another. While missionary efforts in Continental India, apart from the projected patronage of the State, were systematically discouraged by the powers that then were, the island of Ceylon, lying like the threshold before the gate of the East, was placed under the more free regimen of the king's cabinet-ministers; and to this more favoured region Coke found his attention very strongly attracted, as being at once accessible, and forming a kind of outpost for the attainment of his ulterior object. In Ceylon, too, some of the European languages, English, Dutch, and especially Portuguese, had an extensive currency, and might serve as vehicles of ministerial service while the missionaries were acquiring the use of the native tongues. These predilections for Ceylon were strengthened by the opinion of Dr. Buchanan, and confirmed in the feelings of Dr. Coke by the indications of Providence in the fact that one of the high functionaries of the island, the chief justice of Ceylon, had given expression to his wish that a Wesleyan mission might be undertaken there. It was in 1809 that the dignitary I refer to, the Hon. Sir Alexander Johnston, a devout Christian as well as a learned and diligent judge, was on an official visit to England. He was a friend of Mr. Wilberforce; and in their casual interviews with one another they would "talk," as brethren in Christ Jesus, "of the greatness of His majesty, and speak of His kingdom," the misery of the world without it, the signs of its approach, and the means by which the way of the Lord is prepared. In these conversations the judge deplored the horrid condition of the heathen in Ceylon, and the low state of religion even among those portions of the people who were nominally Christians. Whereupon Mr. Wilberforce made honourable

mention of the missionary efforts of the Methodists, and in effect recommended Sir Alexander to open a negotiation with them for an extension of their agencies to that island.

Dr. Adam Clarke, to whom Mr. Wilberforce shortly after communicated these favourable indications, made a statement of them to the Conference, who, though fully sensible of their importance, felt themselves, from a weight of pecuniary difficulties, inadequate at that time to take advantage of them. They had tended, however, to give a substance and definitiveness to Coke's hitherto vague and uncertain intentions; and the period had now come when he felt constrained without further delay to carry them into effect.

Yet, upon the verge of the undertaking, he became more fully sensible of its gravity. The work itself was a difficult one, and the expenditure serious: moreover, the inroads which time and toil had made upon his own vigour could not be concealed from himself. His personal friends had painful misgivings. While they admired his self-denying zeal, they were afflicted with the conviction that he could obey its impulses only by the sacrifice of his life. They felt themselves, therefore, warranted to dissuade him from engaging personally in the attempt. But no considerations of that kind which they could put before him were strong enough to shake the steadfast purpose of his soul. Thus, in reply to a letter from his friend Drew, in which the latter had urged him to the abandonment of the plan "on account of his age, the shock which his constitution must sustain by a residence in the torrid zone, the difficulty of rendering the organs of articulation sufficiently flexible to pronounce new languages, and, finally, his inability to leave behind him a successor who should be at once able and willing to beg from door to door to support the missions already established,"—he wrote from "the preaching-house, Dublin, June 28th, 1813," the following decisive words:—"I beg pardon for being so long in answering your letter. I have laboured in the begging way since the last Conference more arduously than ever; except

about a month or six weeks, when I swam in waves of woe on account of my late precious wife. I am now dead to Europe, and alive for India. God Himself has said to me, 'Go to Ceylon.' I am so fully convinced of the will of God, that methinks I had rather be set naked on the coast of Ceylon, without clothes, and without a friend, than not go there. The Portuguese language is spoken all round Ceylon, and indeed all along the coast of India. According to Dr. Buchanan, there are five hundred thousand nominal Christians in Ceylon, and now only two ministers to take care of them. I am learning the Portuguese language continually, and am perfectly certain I shall conquer it before I land in Ceylon. The fleets sail in October and January. If the Conference employ me to raise the money for the outset, I shall not be able to sail till January. I shall bear my own expenses, of course. I shall probably be here till this day fortnight: then I set off for Liverpool."

CHAPTER II.

THE ESSAY.

At Liverpool the yearly English Conference, the last that Coke attended, was about to assemble. The Rev. Walter Griffith was chosen president, and the Doctor once more took his old office of secretary. In the review of the missionary department, in which it appeared that the number of members on the foreign stations had now advanced to nearly seventeen thousand, the new project came under solemn deliberation. At the previous London District-Meeting, in the month of May, the question had been largely discussed; when, unmoved by the objections of some of the ministers, founded on the monetary difficulties of the Connexion, and their fears for the Doctor's life, he described to them the deep sense of duty from which he was acting, and earnestly implored their concurrence; assuring them that, so far from being afraid of losing life in the cause, "their very consent, he believed, would even add years to his life; while, on the other hand, their refusal would infallibly shorten his days." It may be supposed that the steadfast discouragement with which some of the elderly ministers, who had thought well over the matter in the interval, met the Doctor's overture at the Conference, was no small grief to him. The question was so largely canvassed as to need an adjournment for the following day. Among the men who advocated the mission, Thomas Roberts, one of Coke's most intimate friends, who had preached expressly about it before the Conference, delivered a moving appeal. Reece, Bunting, and Atmore came out on the same side. But the appearance of the case at the close of the day had an unfavourable bearing. In returning to his lodgings,

the minister (Mr. Clough) who walked home with him has related that Dr. Coke was so depressed in his feelings as to weep in the street. The following morning he did not appear at the early sitting of the Conference. Mr. Clough called to inquire for him. Admitted to his chamber, he perceived at once that the Doctor had passed the night without repose. In fact, he intimated to his visiter that he had spent much of it on the floor in prayer for India. When at the Conference, in the forenoon session, the debate on the motion of Mr. Atmore was resumed, Dr. Coke rose and told them all that was in his heart, in an address so clear, and an appeal so forcible, that the difficulties which in the conscientious view of the opponents of the measure had been regarded as insuperable, seemed to dissolve and disappear. He detailed the providential circumstances which led him to desire the establishment of the mission; the favourable disposition which some men in power had manifested towards it; the grand duty of preaching the tidings of mercy to the perishing millions of the East; and then, making the offer of himself, and of the proffered services of the ministers who had consented "to dare with himself the dangers of the enterprise," he added, boldly and generously, "that, if the Connexion could not furnish the expense, he would be prepared to defray the expenditure necessary to the outfit and commencement of the work, to the extent of six thousand pounds." Awed into acquiescence by so splendid an example of devotion and generosity, his brethren in the Conference at once gave their consent.* It was thereupon resolved that "the Conference authorizes and appoints Dr. Coke to undertake a mission to Ceylon and Java, and allows him to take with him six missionaries, exclusive of one for the Cape of Good Hope."

The measures for carrying such a resolution into effect were already in progress. For some time previously the Doctor, in his various journeys, had been intent on securing the services

* Smith, vol. ii., p. 540.

of a corps of suitable men to be his fellow-labourers in the newly-opening sphere. His first design was to take out not less than twelve; and it should be mentioned, to the honour of the Methodist ministers, that, in responding to his invitation, not only that number were willing to encounter the task, but several others had signified their wish to place themselves at his disposal. The Conference, however, hesitated, and indeed refused, to undertake an experiment made on so large a scale; and the Doctor was obliged to content himself with a smaller number. He therefore modified his arrangements, and proposed that only seven missionaries should be appointed in the first instance; one of them to be stationed in the colony of the Cape of Good Hope, another in the island of Java, the remaining five in Ceylon; and that, on the part of the Conference, any further supply of missionaries to the East should be afforded according to the openings and reception with which the outgoing company might be favoured. This amended plan being accepted by the Conference, Dr. Coke selected from the original twelve the following seven men, and presented them to the Conference for their approbation and official appointment:—William Ault, James Lynch, George Erskine, William Martin Harvard, Thomas Hall Squance, Benjamin Clough, and John M'Kenny.*

Of these respected ministers it may be remarked, that Messrs. Ault and Lynch had already served in the itinerant work at home five years; Mr. Erskine had just completed his four years' probation; Messrs. Harvard and Squance had fulfilled, the former three years, and the latter one year, of their novitiate; and Messrs. Clough and M'Kenny now received their admission to the same grade. The only survivor of this little band (1860) is the Rev. T. H. Squance, who, after an honourable career in the East, sustains with an unbroken vigour the office of superintendent of an English Circuit, and chairman of the District; a man well known and approved for his zeal and ability; an energetic preacher,

* Mr. M'Kenny did not go out till four months after.

whether in English, Portuguese, or Tamul, of which latter language he is the author of a useful grammar. Mr. Clough, also, greatly distinguished himself in Oriental learning. His various works on the Indian languages and literature have won for his name a high consideration among Asiatic scholars. Mr. Harvard, a man handsome in person, gentlemanly in manners, refined in sentiment, and holy in life, was regarded by Dr. Coke as a most acceptable acquisition to his party. He not only well fulfilled the hopes which were entertained of him as a missionary, but gave to the world a well-written history of the foundation and progress of the Methodist cause in Ceylon and India. After many years' service in the east, he was appointed a general superintendent in Canada. As a token of honour, one of the Transatlantic universities created him a master of arts, and subsequently a doctor in divinity. His last years were spent in the useful toils of the ministry in England, where, as the governor and chaplain of the Wesleyan college at Richmond, he died in 1857

From the moment Dr. Coke obtained the final sanction of the Conference to his projects, his days and nights were crowded with the cares of preparation for their fulfilment. He drew up a plan for the sustentation of the general missionary cause among the Methodists by the organized action of Branch Societies, which he recommended should be formed for that object throughout the Connexion; a measure which, after his decease, was carried into practice with most blessed effects.* He then settled his own temporal affairs; and in making his will, of which Messrs. Holloway, Roberts, and Brackenbury were appointed the executors, he gave the last token of his inviolable devotion to Methodism, by bequeathing all the property he should die possessed of to the fund for relieving the wants of its aged and disabled ministers.

Meanwhile, upon every available opportunity, he applied

* Smith, vol. ii., p. 542.

for help towards the Asiatic mission, and met for the most part with a generous response. This was especially the case in Liverpool, where he commenced begging even while the Conference was sitting.

The Doctor now assembled his little college of Missionaries in London, and set them to work upon their studies. He was disappointed in not being able to obtain for them a professor of either the Tamul or the Cingalese language; and, finding that they would have to wait for this advantage till they should arrive in the East, he laid the greater stress on their applying themselves almost exclusively for the present to the study of Portuguese and Dutch, in which he provided them with able masters. With Portuguese he was himself becoming familiar. The application he had given to it for several months became increased, says Mr. Harvard, "in proportion as the time appeared to draw on in which he might in that language proclaim to the heathen, and the nominal Christians of India, the unsearchable riches of Christ; and so intense was his desire to become familiar with it, that I do not remember to have seen from that time any book in his hand which did not tend in some way or other to assist his acquirement of it."

He would have found the actual *patois* which passes under the name of Portuguese very different from the genuine language of European Portugal. With the latter he had made a comfortable progress. The professor who gave them lessons, a Portuguese Catholic clergyman, accorded the Doctor great praise for his diligence, and spoke of his success in the study of the language in terms of admiration and surprise. He repeatedly told Mr. Harvard that "it was an instance he had rarely known, of a person at an advanced age acquiring so great a converse with the peculiar idioms, and attaining such a facility in the pronunciation, of a foreign language." But what may not a man do in these things with a resolute will, and sanctified, as in this case, by the inspiration of the grace of God? Besides, the missionary should expect a supernatural

aid in the use of the ordinary means of learning the tongues in which he is to deliver his Divine message. I ought to add, from Mr. Harvard, that the professor often expressed as great a veneration for the fervent, zealous, and heavenly spirit of his aged pupil, as for his talents and learning.

Another care was to furnish himself and companions with suitable recommendations, and introductory letters, from persons of station in England who had connexions and influence in the provinces to which they were bound. We have already seen that Dr. Coke enjoyed the confidence and esteem of some of the leading men of the government, while his own circle of acquaintance comprehended many of the public characters of the day. In the present instance he had but to ask, and to obtain. The secretary of state for the colonies, Earl Bathurst, wrote for him a letter of introduction to the governor of Ceylon; while Lord Teignmouth, Mr. Wilberforce, Mr. Grant, Mr. Stephen, and Dr. Buchanan afforded him similar good offices with various persons of consideration in Ceylon and Bombay.

In these busy weeks, too, the outfit required no small attention. In this department some unnecessary expenditure was incurred, from inexperience, in the purchase of many articles not suited to Indian habits of life. The missionaries are now fitted out at half the expense, and with much greater comfort. I have now here a manuscript in Dr. Coke's writing detailing the minutiae of those affairs; and a very curious document it is. He was not disposed to be scanty in the matter at all; and acting entirely by his own judgment, without consulting the committee, he appears to have astounded and grieved them when the sum total was presented for their consideration. Appended to this document there is a memorandum of the Rev. Robert Smith, who was appointed to negotiate and adjust this business between them and the Doctor. "When the committee were informed of the great quantity of clothes, books, and other articles, which had been purchased without once

consulting them, they were exceedingly hurt, as many of the articles bought were altogether unnecessary. When they expressed their great dissatisfaction with much that had been thus done, Dr. Coke informed them that, if they would draw out an account of the articles which they thought the missionaries ought to have, he would bear all the expense of the other articles himself, provided the Conference should approve of the proposal."

Among the purchases there was one which has proved of no small importance in the mission,—a printing-press, with nearly £200 worth of materials. This purchase was the more appropriate, as two of the missionaries had been trained to the typographic art.

I mention another item merely for the sentiment which attends it. "10. The shipping expenses," says the Doctor, "came to £42. I mean the custom-house duties, the poundage or centage. I had a mind to apply to the Treasury for the discharge of the duty; but I thought it was too trifling a thing to bring before the Treasury-Board, when the government had so generously sanctioned our missions."

He not only furnished the brethren with a library of good books, but took care that they should be strongly bound, as we learn from another item. "Mr. Baynes's bill amounts to £99. 19s. 4d., which is principally for binding all the missionaries' books which were not fully bound with Russia backs and covers. Dr. Coke sold to Mr. Baynes part of his library, that he thought would not suit the missionaries, for about £25, and also waste paper for between £6 and £7. Dr. Coke expected to be paid in cash, but most probably did not mention this to Mr. Baynes, who understood that he was to repay the two sums by such books as would suit the mission library; and therefore Dr. Coke was obliged to buy of Mr. Baynes Sir William Jones's Asiatic Researches, and other books which might be of importance to the library, as the payment of those two sums."

The Rev. Mr. Harvard being engaged to be married before

leaving England, to Miss Elizabeth Parks, whose piety, intelligence, and zeal made her a most suitable partner for the life that lay before her husband, they were married on the 24th of November. Dr. Coke himself, by the polite permission of the rector of the parish, solemnized their union, which, ten years after, death dissolved. Mrs. Harvard died, as she had lived, a true-hearted disciple of Jesus.* Two of the other missionaries also, Messrs. Ault and M'Kenny, were married men.

The passage was now to be secured, and some mornings were occupied among the docks on the river in finding a suitable ship. Accommodation for the whole party could not be obtained in the same vessel, except by a much-increased expenditure; and passages were ultimately taken on board of two Indiamen,—the “Cabalva,” Captain Birch, and the “Lady Melville,” Captain Lockner. It was arranged that Messrs. Ault, Lynch, Erskine, and Squance should sail in the “Lady Melville;” and that Messrs. Clough and Harvard should be the companions of Dr. Coke in the “Cabalva.”

All these secular concerns having been provided for, the missionaries received ordination; two of them at Lambeth chapel, two at St. George's-in-the-East, and the remaining two at Great-Queen-street chapel. These services attracted large assemblages of devout Christians who had long revered the missionary bishop, and now met for the last time, under these impressive circumstances, to join their prayers with his for the coming of the kingdom of God.

Notice having been received that the Indiamen had left Gravesend for the rendezvous of the fleet at Portsmouth, the missionary party met the committee and London ministers to receive their final valediction. Their official instructions were read to them; then several of the senior ministers addressed them in counsels intended for their private and public life; and the interview was concluded with invocations of the

* See “Memoirs of Mrs. Elizabeth Harvard, late of the Wesleyan Mission, Ceylon. By her Husband.”

Divine mercy and blessing, offered up with strong emotion and streaming tears.

Some tender partings were to be encountered, also, between the missionaries and their relatives, with pangs of feeling with which the stranger cannot intermeddle. Dr. Coke, also, though he had none of those most intimate ties to rend asunder, had much-loved friends about him,—and the Hebrew proverb says truly, “Love is the nearest kindred,”—who had the presentiment that they should see his face no more. In some of these cases he shrunk from the pains of the farewell. Thus to one of his esteemed friends he sent, instead, a parting token, in a paper on which he had transcribed some stanzas from a favourite hymn by Madame Guyon:—

“O Thou by long experience tried,
Near whom no grief can long abide;
My God, how full of sweet content
I pass my years of banishment!

“All scenes alike engaging prove
To souls inspired with heavenly love;
Where’er they dwell, they dwell in Thee,
In heaven, in earth, or on the sea.

“To me remains nor place nor time,
My country is in every clime;
I can be calm, and free from care,
On any shore, since God is there.

“Could I be cast where Thou art not,
That were indeed a dreadful lot;
But regions none remote I call,
Secure of finding God in all.”

He now left London for Portsmouth, accompanied by Mr. Clough, in a frame solemn, but serenely hopeful. It was on the 10th of December; and he told Mr. Clough that he considered it as the epoch and commencement of their mission, breaking out in loud praise to God, who had thus opened their way. He had appointed the other missionaries to meet him, as a common rendezvous, at the Bush hotel, in Portsmouth. The whole party were found punctual in their arrival.

“And when,” says Mr. Clough, “we were all assembled around him, he rose from his chair, and, lifting up his heart and hands to God, exclaimed, ‘Here we all are before God, six missionaries, and two dear sisters, now embarked in the most important and most glorious work in the world. Glory be ascribed to His blessed name, that He has given you to be my companions and assistants in carrying the Gospel to the poor Asiatics; and that He has not suffered parents, nor brothers, nor sisters, nor the dearest friends, to stop any of you from going with me to India!’” At this time he seemed as if he had not a dormant faculty, and every power of his soul was alive to the work in which he had engaged.

They were soon visited by the ministers of the Portsmouth Circuit, the Rev. Messrs. Edmondson, Aikenhead, Fish, and Beal, who welcomed and received them with every kind solicitude for their accommodation and comfort while sojourning in that neighbourhood. Several of the Methodist families were anxious to have them as their guests. Dr. Coke accordingly received the hospitality of Mr. Webb, senior; Messrs. Squance and Clough were entertained by Mr. James Johnson; Mr. and Mrs. Ault, at Mrs. Methwell’s; and Mr. and Mrs. Harvard, at Mr. John Keet’s. I may literally say, that the kindness of these friends was remembered with pleasure and gratitude by the missionaries all the days of their life.

On the two Sundays which intervened before their final embarkation, the principal pulpits of the Circuit were occupied by Dr. Coke and the missionaries. Their presence at Portsmouth having become universally known, and the object on which they were bound awakening the sympathy of all good Christians, the congregations were immense in number, and pervaded by a most solemn influence. This was especially the case at the last sermon of the Doctor’s,—the last he ever preached in England. That discourse, which the present writer had the privilege of hearing, was delivered in St. Peter’s chapel, Portsca, from the text of the Psalm, “Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God,” and presented a

summary of his life-long meditations on the progress and triumph of the Christian faith. And, after enlarging on the incalculable importance of the missionary work, on the various openings for evangelic labours then presenting themselves in many parts of the heathen world, and the assured success which, notwithstanding temporary difficulties, must attend such labours when prosecuted in the right spirit, he concluded in the following heart-stirring and, I may say, prophetic strain :—

“ Relying on the promise of Him who has said, ‘ Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation,’ we go forth in the name of God, trusting solely to Him for the success which we hope to realize. It is in your power to be co-workers together with us, and with God. Let me therefore entreat you, as you wish well to the cause of Christ, to render this great work some pecuniary aid in the present instance ; and on future occasions, when our brethren shall solicit your contributions, do not withhold your hand.

“ This is, perhaps, the last time I shall ever have an opportunity of addressing you. Within a few days we shall bid adieu to England, and, probably, for ever. In the meanwhile let me entreat you to regard your own souls, and to use all diligence in making your calling and election sure. Temptations are at home, as well as abroad. The emissaries of Satan are in every place ; so that we are no longer safe than while we keep close to God.

“ For my own part, I am fully persuaded that we, who are about to leave you, are in the path of duty ; and I am perfectly convinced that God will bless our labours, though to what extent and in what manner may be unknown. We are in the hands of Omnipotence, and under the Divine protection ; and here we repose in safety and peace.

“ It is of little consequence whether we take our flight to glory from the land of our nativity, from the trackless ocean, or the shores of Ceylon.

‘I cannot go
Where universal Love not shines around;
And where He vital breathes, there must be joy.’

“Above all, let us crave an interest in your prayers, not only for our personal safety, but for the success of our mission; for, without the Divine blessing, the most favourable omens must prove vain.

“Let me furthermore beseech you not to estimate the probability of our success by the insignificance of the instruments: the work is of God. There was a time when Christianity itself had, in all human probability, less to hope. The powers which now favour us were hostile to it; and yet, in three hundred years, it rose upon the ruins of Paganism. Who can say that a similar result may not take place among the millions of India, whose future generations shall rise up and call us blessed?

“WE CAN APPEAL TO HEAVEN FOR THE PURITY OF OUR MOTIVES, AND WE LOOK INTO ETERNITY FOR OUR FINAL REWARD. FULL OF THIS CONVICTION, WE TRUST THAT GOD, HAVING MADE US INSTRUMENTAL IN TURNING THE HEARTS OF THE DISOBEDIENT TO THE WISDOM OF THE JUST, WILL GIVE US OUR PART IN THE FIRST RESURRECTION, THAT ON US THE SECOND DEATH MAY HAVE NO POWER.”

CHAPTER III.

THE DIVINE DECISION.

ON the 29th of December the missionaries received a summons to embark on the following day. Early on that morning the commodore's signal-guns set the fleet unmooring. Mr. Clough hastened to inform the Doctor, who received the tidings with joy. Just then a note came from Captain Birch to tell him that the "Cabalva" had unmoored, and was then under weigh for St. Helen's. Hereupon the missionaries, according to a previous arrangement, met at the house of Mr. Keet, with whose worthy family, along with the ministers and several other old friends for whom the Doctor had many years entertained a growing regard, they joined in prayer, and sang their farewell hymn of faith and hope:—

"Blest be the dear uniting love
That will not let us part;
Our bodies may far off remove,
We still are one in heart.

"We part in body, not in mind;
Our minds continue one;
And, each to each in Jesus join'd,
We hand in hand go on.

"Subsists within us all one soul,
No power can make us twain;
And mountains rise, and oceans roll,
To sever us, in vain."

And, having commended one another to the everlasting mercy of God, they proceeded in two companies to the shore. One party embarked in a pilot-boat for the "Lady Melville;" the other, with Dr. Coke, for the "Cabalva." A minister who

was present has told me how much he was struck with the Doctor's appearance as he took his seat in the stern of the boat with folded hands, so entirely absorbed in thought and feeling as to be apparently insensible to all surrounding objects. And we wonder not. It was the supreme epoch of his life. The past dissolves, and the final task concentrates all his powers. England, with all he loved, recedes and wanes. His thoughts go eastward, outstripping the winds; while the ocean, which bears him thither, seems lighted with a track of glory shed from the wings of the angel who was seen in the Apocalypse, having the everlasting Gospel to preach to all the dwellers upon earth.

The following morning, the last day in the year 1813, the beautiful panorama of the Isle of Wight, and the grand sights which Portsmouth, with its towers and spires, its ramparts and battle-ships, presented in that time of war, had vanished from their eyes; and the fleet was on its way. Once more on deck, the Doctor found himself returning to the habits and feelings of by-gone years. A cheerful vigour, an expanding hope, dispelled the sadness that might otherwise have hung upon him, and gave fresh zest to the satisfaction he enjoyed in fulfilling his duty to God and to mankind.

The fleet in which they sailed consisted of thirty-three vessels, with a convoy of a line-of-battle ship of seventy-four guns, the "Medway," Commodore Craig,—carrying on board Lord Charles Somerset, governor of the Cape of Good Hope, —two frigates, and a sloop of war. Five-and-twenty of the vessels were small merchantmen, some bound to the Brazils, others to the Cape and St. Helena, and some were store-ships for Lord Wellington's army in Spain. There were, also, two country-built and six regular Indiamen, among which last were the "Cabalva" and the "Lady Melville." In the "Cabalva" there were, in addition to Dr. Coke and his two friends, a pretty large assemblage of cabin-passengers, whose intercourse with each other was quiet and agreeable throughout the voyage. Mr. Harvard has left upon record his own

feelings with regard to these gentlepeople, in saying that "it was a happiness to sail with them;" that "several were persons of talent and reading, and also cheerfully communicative." Dr. Coke soon attracted their attention. They had observed that, after coming on board, and looking round him, he had retired to his own cabin. The next morning on re-appearing he commenced his usual engagements, as one "'midst busy multitudes alone." They first set him down as a singular character. When the ship came into the Bay of Biscay, and had to contend with gales of wind and tempestuous seas, the Doctor seemed alike unmoved, pursuing his exercises of prayer, study, reading, and writing, as though he had been the tenant of a quiet hermitage. Respect was the one feeling which grew upon them, as they observed and talked of him. And the good opinion which he had won increased as they enjoyed his instructive and engaging conversation. They saw in him the Christian divine; but they found him too, as acquaintance grew, the finished gentleman, whose easy carriage and polite address made it a pleasure to be with him; and when they knew more of his personal history, and the purposes which had led him forth upon this holy pilgrimage, their esteem for him rose to a religious veneration.

From his journal we may learn Dr. Coke's own impressions at the outset of the voyage :—

"In the ship in which I have sailed there are above four hundred souls. Of these, two hundred are soldiers; who, excepting a very few, are, as far as I can learn, young lads from Ireland, of the Roman Catholic persuasion. About fifty of the sailors are Lascars, chiefly Mahometans. The Gospel door, as it respects that people, seems entirely shut. Their religion was established by the sword, and I fear that the sword must go through their nations before they will bow to the sceptre of Jesus. However, by their own Master they must stand or fall. We have among us some Portuguese, natives of India. I wish we may be useful to them. In the

dining-room our number is twenty-six, including the captain and his two officers. They are very polite: but, O, we want to save souls!

"The sight of such a floating city is very agreeable; and, were it not that the lagging ships which must be frequently waited for lengthen out the voyage, would be quite desirable. In a calm the boats are passing and repassing from ship to ship. Each of the large vessels has its telegraph, composed of various shapes and colours, by which they convey messages, and frequently compare their longitudes.

"In leaving England we came very near to the coast of Cornwall. We were a little surprised at the movements of our commodore, as he certainly went out of his way. But we were satisfied when we found he had moved towards the coast to receive some dispatches from Falmouth. Had it been the Divine will, I should have been glad to spend a few days with my friends in that part of Cornwall; and more particularly, because to our generous friends in that county, if we except London and the north, our missions are more indebted than to any other people in the world."

As already said, the Doctor was no sooner established on board than he resumed his studies. It had become the fixed habit of his life to improve every hour which his numerous avocations allowed him for ingathering knowledge, which in those hours of labour he was in one way or another giving out to others. He enjoyed now, in his declining years, a relish for the pursuit of useful, and above all of sacred, literature, as great, or greater than he had ever found. With Sir William Jones, he could fully say,—

"Before thy mystic altar, heavenly Truth,
I kneel in manhood, as I knelt in youth;
Thus let me kneel till this dull form decay,
And life's last shade be brighten'd by thy ray: "—

or, with Bishop Berkeley, whose words,* in fact, Sir William

* The last sentence in his "Siris."

has thus beautifully versified,—“He that would make a real progress in knowledge, must dedicate his age as well as youth, the latter growth as well as the first-fruits, at the altar of Truth.”

Dr. Coke richly partook the pleasure of this present recess from toil, and the hours for reading and meditation it allowed him. He blessed God alike for labour and for rest; and now, with his Bible before him, he sends his glance back upon the past of life, and forward along those solemn vistas which the Gospel hope discloses to the faithful:—

“I have a most charming study. It has two large windows that open from the stern to the sea; and my elbow-chair and table are placed in the most convenient situation possible. I have seen, I think, seventeen of our ships sailing after us. Here I employ almost all my time, and nearly the whole of it in reading and writing Portuguese, excepting my hours of meditation; which indeed I can hardly except, for my chief study is my Portuguese Bible. O, how sweet is the word of God! I have loved it, since I came into this ship, more than ever I did before.

‘Jesus gives me in His word
Food and medicine, shield and sword.’

“I now feel more than ever the value of retirement, silence, and tranquillity of mind. *Deus nobis hæc otia fecit*: God Himself has favoured me with these leisure hours. Yet I cannot repent of the thousands of hours which I have spent in at once the most vile, most glorious drudgery of begging from house to house. The tens of thousands of pounds which I have raised for the missions, and the beneficial effects thereof, form an ample compensation for all the time and all the labour. The whole was of God. But what would my heart have felt if all the missions already established had been left without support on my departure from England? But it was the work of God. He alone began it, He alone increased it, and (if I may presume so to express myself) He has bound Himself to support it. He therefore, before I sailed, said to

the north, 'Bring forth,' and to the south, 'Keep not back.' The west, also, is coming forward. The sister island has taken the flame, and the highly-favoured British isles combine to spread our missions throughout the world. How light it has made my heart! Next to union and communion with my God, nothing could afford me such high satisfaction. I hasten to Asia with alacrity and joy; and yet must confess that, if the clouds had been ever so obscure, if all human aid had apparently been withdrawn from those missions, the interests of which are so deeply interwoven with the very strings of my heart, my Divine call to Asia has been so indubitably clear, that I should have been obliged to throw everything into the hands of my God, and to say to Him, 'Here I am; send me to Asia.'"

The dispatches having been received from Falmouth, the fleet bent its way for the ocean. Daylight faded away with the last glimpses of the Land's-End. The Doctor paced the quarter-deck with Mr. Clough, watching the dying rays of the Lizard lighthouse. At length the glimmering spark vanished altogether, and at his suggestion they retired below and committed themselves and their fellow-voyagers to the care of Him

"Who points the clouds their course,
Whom winds and seas obey."

On the 6th of January great gales rose from the eastward, and increased the formidable trials of the Bay of Biscay. The tempest grew stronger for some days, till many of the ships were more or less dismantled. The "Cabalva" suffered but little. On the 19th one of the merchant-ships was missing, and was not afterwards seen or heard of. She had been firing guns of distress in the night, but the gale was so violent that no relief could be given her. On the 24th, the gale still raging, six more ships were missing. One of them was a country Indiaman, the "Fort William." When last seen, she was in great distress, and apparently unmanageable.

"January 26th.—No tidings of the missing ships. We

have now given up all hopes of again seeing the frigate which was dispatched in search of them: not that we have any doubts about her safety, but have little reason to expect that she will now find us out on the great ocean, as the violent gales have tossed us about in all directions. What a wonderful providence! The 'Fort William' was the first ship I visited in London; and I had serious thoughts of taking a passage in it, and all my companions. But my brethren urged that it was entirely manned (officers excepted) by Lascars; who could not be depended on in times of danger in the management of a large ship, without a mixture of British tars among them. This argument was strengthened on our return from the East-India Docks to Poplar, where we were informed that just before a party of these very Lascars had been fighting with knives, and that one of them had been stabbed to death in the scuffle. Indeed, the most intelligent about naval affairs in the company in our ship are of opinion that her distress, and most probably the entire loss of her, was owing to her being manned only by Lascars; for she was a very fine ship, and, alas! was full of passengers.

"One of our soldiers has died; and, after the burial-service was read, his corpse was consigned, in his hammock made heavy with sand, to a watery grave.

"Those who were on the poop of our ship had the melancholy sight of a sailor belonging to another vessel falling from the top-gallant yard into the sea. It does not appear that he could have been saved by any exertions."

A fleet of forty ships crossed them. Captain Birch held a conversation with their commodore, as he passed, by means of trumpets. They were bound for Lisbon and the Mediterranean. In the third week of January, the now diminished India fleet were off Madeira. It had been the intention of the commodore to put in there for a few days, and Dr. Coke had got ready a packet of letters for England; but the violence of the gale obliged them to wear off for the south.

On the 25th they were in sight of Palma, one of the Western Islands.

Meanwhile, surrounded by mountainous waves and swelling tempests, the Doctor maintained his usual equanimity. "I happened to mention how pleased I was, on one of my voyages to America, with some canary-birds: on which the steward brought me a canary, and hung it up in my study, within about a yard of my elbow-chair. The little creature sings so sweetly, and is so entertaining, that I have given him the name of Dick, which he seems now to be well acquainted with."

There were nevertheless some causes of disquietude, in addition to the discomforts and dangers of the hitherto stormy voyage. The declining health of Mrs. Ault, the wife of one of the missionaries on board the "*Lady Melville*," excited but too truly his misgivings on her behalf. She had arrived in London from Cheshire with her husband, in an extremely feeble state; and at Portsmouth Dr. Coke had been given to understand, by the physician who attended her, that consumption had already attained that advanced stage in her constitution that he had not the least hope of her life, unless the climate of the torrid zone should prove a restorative. Her anxious husband was kept from despair by this fallacious contingency; but Dr. Coke feared the worst. Before they embarked, the preachers of the two ships had agreed on a signal that should indicate the health or sickness of either party, by a white handkerchief in the former, and a coloured one, in the latter case. From the "*Cabalva*" they were able in general to display the signal of health; but from the "*Lady Melville*" no such token met their eye. From the time Mrs. Ault had commenced the voyage she became too ill to sit up, except on two occasions, towards the end of January, when her companions were pained to witness the change which had taken place in her appearance. She herself, however, though now fully aware of her situation, was peacefully resigned to the Divine will. This state of things was made known to Dr. Coke by Messrs. Ault and Squance,

who, during a cessation of the wind on the 5th of February, had paid a visit to the "Cabalva," and had deeply moved his parental sensibilities. Five days after, as they sat at breakfast, an officer came in and informed them that the "Lady Melville" had hoisted her flag half-mast high. Several of the other ships immediately did the same, and the "Cabalva" in like manner. Every one in the company, aware of the illness of Mrs. Ault, knew how to interpret these movements. She had died that morning, February 10th, and was buried in the great deep in the evening of the same day. "The signals," writes Coke, "all continued half-mast high, till about an hour before sunset, when the 'Lady Melville' lifted up her death-signal topmast high, which was followed by all the fleet. This was the sign that the officiating minister (who was Mr. Squance) had begun to read. And when the 'Melville' had dropped down her signal, the rest of the fleet followed her example, to show that the solemnity was over.

"A few days after this, Mr. Harvard and Mr. Clough took the advantage of a calm, and visited our friends. I am so old that I dare not venture up and down the sides of ships but as little as possible. Messrs. Harvard and Clough found Mr. Ault humbly resigned, though feeling exquisitely. His dear wife died triumphant in the faith, and her resignation was most entire. When her husband spoke to her relative to her remains being carried to Bombay for interment, she answered in words like these: 'O, no; let me be buried in the ocean. It matters but little what becomes of the mortal part, so that the immortal be secure!'"

This is one of the last sentences in Dr. Coke's journal; and his own approaching fate gives it an affecting significance.

There was another cause of discomfort to him on board the "Cabalva," in that, as a minister of religion, he should be debarred all this time from the public exercise of his office. In most of his former voyages he had stately preached, as we have seen, to the people of the ship; but this was not permitted in a ship belonging to the East-India Company. The

Sabbath, indeed, had a certain recognition. The usual flag was hoisted at the mizen, and several kinds of work were placed in abeyance; and some difference also was made in dress. Moreover, when the weather allowed, there was a gathering on deck for the crew, soldiers, and such passengers as were disposed to attend, where, under the shelter of flags and sails, they heard the Liturgy and Scriptures. But on these occasions the captain officiated, while two ordained ministers of the Gospel, and a venerable clergyman of the Established Church, took their places among the hearers. Whence this impropriety? Not by the choice of Captain Birch, who was upon all occasions a man of honour, urbanity, and delicate feeling, and, in the circumstances in which he was afterwards placed with the ministers, a most trusty friend; but simply because they were missionaries, and the wise men of Leadenhall-street gave all such people their stern discountenance. Captain Birch acknowledged that he had received instructions "to go on as usual;" that is to say, in the customary services of religion in the ship to ignore the presence of the missionaries. In making this intimation, Mr. Birch remarked to Mr. Clough: "It has frequently been a matter of pain to me to hinder so excellent and valuable a man from doing all the good in his power. I cannot express the respect and regard I had for Dr. Coke since I had the honour and very great pleasure of knowing him."

The passengers, as well as the captain, disapproved of the restraint, and hit upon a plan to obviate it in some degree. They had heard that the Doctor had published a Commentary on the Scriptures. It was inquired for, and a proposal was made that he should favour the company with some readings from it on Sunday evenings. And in this way he went through with them the whole of the excellent Introduction, which gives so much additional value to that good work. In this way several of the Sabbath evenings were religiously and profitably passed.

In all other respects, too, as praying with the sick, con-

versing and reading with the soldiers and sailors, no restraint at all was set upon their movements. Among the soldiers, most of whom were Irish Catholics, there were some who had attended the ministry of the Methodists, and some who had been formerly members of the Society, but who, from adversity, or relapses into vice, had forsaken the guides of their youth, and were now exiles from their kindred and country. These men were gathered together in a little "band of hope." They met in Mr. Clough's cabin, and the Doctor regularly visited them for conversation and prayer. In one of his memorandums I find their names set down by him: "Corporal John Clinton, Corporal Charles Whiting, Watson the smith, Price, Clinton, Clark, Lowry, George Harnden, William Davis, Cornelius Vowles." These men he used to address with friendly and religious counsels; and he poured out his soul for and with them in prayer and intercession before the Lord. It appears also, and we doubt it not, that in meeting them he himself got good to his own soul, as well as promoted their best interests; generally climbing the ladder from the lower deck, where they met, with a smile which indicated a refreshed and thankful mind.

They found that in several cases the men had once known better days. In Cornelius Vowles, whose name is last mentioned, Mr. Harvard recognised a school-fellow of his own. Among the recruits there were some who had sunk from affluence to worse than poverty, by the stress of vicious habits. Adverting to this melancholy fact, Mr. Harvard remarks that "there are few situations in which the strange and distressing vicissitudes of human life are more strikingly manifested than in vessels which carry out reinforcements for our Indian armies. Many of these unpitied men have been in circumstances of ease, but, having fallen into poverty or disgrace among their own immediate connexions, choose an ignoble exile on a distant shore, where, under some assumed name, they pine away in disease and sorrow, not affording the least clue by which their mournful relatives can trace their

flight or improve their condition." He then extracts a sentence from Coke's private journal, which gives a painful glimpse of a similar case. "S—— taps a hogshead of rum for drink;...discovered by a Lascar. Flogged. Father, a man of some substance in Scotland; himself educated at Islington and Reading. Once a lieutenant in the S—— militia. O, drink!"

Among the good services which the Methodist and other Christian missionary societies have been enabled to accomplish, not a small one is the religious assistance they have rendered to Englishmen in their wide wanderings, both geographical and moral. Many a reprobate, in the army and out of it, has been reclaimed to virtue and to peace by those good shepherds, the missionaries, who come upon the lost one in the far-off wilderness, and bring him back to the fold.

On board the "Lady Melville," also, our men were doing some good. They commenced morning and evening prayers in their own cabin, and a weekly class-meeting for themselves; and, as their acquaintance with the passengers and crew increased, one and another joined them at prayers, and three in the class-meeting. The soldiers, also, began to come to prayers; and on the last Sunday in January an intimation was given in a note from some of the military and ship's officers, that, if agreeable to the ministers, they should like to avail themselves of their evening service. The next Sunday evening, several more gentlemen, with some of the ladies, signifying their wish to attend, the officers proposed that the meeting should assemble in their own larger cabin. There was now quite a congregation, the captain himself being present. By and by, in consequence of the illness of one of the officers, which made the large cabin unavailable for the evening, the missionaries were requested to hold the service for that time in the steerage,—the very thing they had been desirous of from the beginning, as it would throw open the privilege for a large number of the soldiers and ship's company, who could not have been permitted access to the cabin. From that time

they could fulfil their duty with much contentment: with what full benefit, eternity only can disclose. Good was visibly done, and evil restrained. From some instances of deplorable immorality, which I find noted by Mr. Squance, in his private journal, with great pain to himself, it may be gathered that without these counteracting influences not a few of the population of that ship would have ended the voyage much worse than when they began it.

The "Cabalva," which was a fast-sailing ship, so far outsped the fleet as in the last week of March to have lost sight of it altogether. Some apprehension was entertained that the separation would last throughout the voyage; but on the third day the ships were again sighted, the captain shortening sail. They had advanced into the latitude of the Cape of Good Hope, where, in the stormy season, the ocean rises into Alpine waves. Exposed now to repeated tempests, the whole fleet, sometimes under almost bare poles, drove at a furious rate over the mountainous billows.* In such hours of terror, Dr. Coke, who combined the steadiness of the old sailor with the tranquillity of the Christian, was observed to try his utmost to quiet the fears, and impart encouragement to the feelings, of his fellow-passengers. He told them about the distressing scenes he had witnessed, in what frail ships he had in past voyages encountered winds and waves as violent, and how much more securely and comfortably they were all now aboard the spacious and well-appointed Indiaman; and cheered them to hope in the omnipotent God whose mercies had been over them each day of the past, and would never be withdrawn from those who trusted in Him.

* "On the return of Gama to Portugal, a fleet of thirteen sail was sent out on the second voyage to India, where the admiral with only six ships arrived. The rest were destroyed by a horrible tempest at the Cape of Good Hope, which lasted twenty days. The day-time, says Faria, was so dark that the sailors could scarcely see each other, or hear, for the horrid noise of the wind. Among those who perished was the celebrated Bartholomew De Diaz, who was the first modern discoverer of the Cape of Good Hope, which he named the Cape of Tempests." —Mickle's Notes on the Lusiad.

The fleet kept the Cape at a wide offing; but the commodore touched at Table-Bay, giving the passengers the opportunity of transmitting their letters to England. It was now the Doctor sent home his own packet; and among the letters it contained is one which, from the explanations it gives of the plans he was purposing to carry out in the East, as well as from the circumstance that it was probably the last letter he ever wrote, I will transcribe entire. He had prepared it for the Missionary Committee, with the wish that it should be read to the next Conference: for which purpose he sent a duplicate of it to the president, and another copy to the Rev. Richard Reece.

"At sea, 30 degrees of latitude south of the equator, 49 degrees of longitude distant from the Cape of Good Hope, March 14th, 1814."*

"VERY DEAR AND HIGHLY-ESTEEMED

FATHERS AND BRETHREN,

"IT was not in my power to take a ship direct for Ceylon; there was not one to be found. All the judicious people in London from whom I could gain intelligence advised that we should sail for Bombay, and that there we should be able immediately to take a ship for Ceylon: but any immediate step of that kind is quite out of the question. The constant series of most dreadful gales which we met with from England to Madeira, and for some time afterwards, whereby seven ships of our fleet are missing and probably lost, with the long calms which we had near the equinoctial line, have put back our voyage at least a month. We have now no reason to expect to be at Bombay till the latter end of May or the beginning of June, as the winds have driven us exceedingly far to the west, and all that must be recovered before we reach the Cape. Indeed, the captains do not now intend to anchor at the Cape. The monsoons change, and blow up the coast of the peninsula

* In the other copy, written four days previously: "At sea, 24 deg. latitude S. of the equator, not a great way from the coast of Brazil."

of India, the coast of Malabar, from south to north, about the first week in May. This will shut us up on that part of India for six months. I obtained the consent of the directors for all of us to go to Bombay, and obtained letters of recommendation of the completest kind. These would have been useful if we had only rested a week at that presidency before we set off for Ceylon.

“My honoured friend, Dr. Buchanan, took pains to convince me of the importance of not crowding ourselves at this first attempt in one place, as it would raise jealousy beyond what we could easily conceive. The same advice I had from other quarters. I therefore intend to divide the missionaries into two parties soon after our reaching Bombay. I shall leave brother and sister Harvard and two single men at Bombay, and take the three other single men with me to Surat. (Sister Ault is dead.) Surat is about one hundred and eighty miles from Bombay, with a good road leading to it along the coast. It contains about 150,000 inhabitants. I cannot doubt but, under the blessing of God, we shall be useful in both places. The Lord has been pleased to give us seven of the ship’s company’s soldiers,—two corporals and five privates, and a soldier’s wife, in our own ship; and there are a few more of them turning to God. In the ‘Lady Melville’ our brethren have been much more successful, I have reason to believe, among the king’s troops. In another ship, the ‘Elphinstone,’ I heard yesterday that there is a soldier who was a member of our Society in Dublin, with his wife, also a member, who long to see us. These two are most excellent singers of our hymns. All these are to be stationed at Bombay or Surat. The Portuguese natives abound in Bombay, and are pretty numerous in Surat. If we form Societies in those places, we dare not leave the lambs to the mercy of wolves. If God be pleased in this wonderful way to give us a double footing on the continent of Asia, it must be our bounden duty to keep it. Two will be wanted for this purpose. I shall then, with my four remaining brethren, remove to Colombo, Ceylon, God

willing. Brother and sister Harvard, and one more, must go by sea; I shall take the other two with me by land. For five hundred miles we must lodge in tents near the principal towns and villages on the coast. Afterwards we shall sail upon a fine natural canal made by sea-water, called the Back-water, for two hundred miles. This will bring us to Travancore, to the Syrian Christians. In this tour I shall have seen all the principal towns of Portuguese Asia, once a vast empire, but now in better hands. I shall be able in this journey to trace the principal work of that holy and celebrated man, Francis Xavier. You will certainly approve of my leaving one missionary, if possible, with the Syrian Christians. There will be then only two remaining for Ceylon, and one for Java. But, to bring to you all the information necessary concerning British Asia, I must visit the late Mr. Swartz's Christians at Tanjore, Madras, and Calcutta. But more especially I must visit Rajamahal, which is about two hundred miles up the Ganges. This place and its mountainous vicinity were recommended to me by my honoured friend, Mr. Charles Grant, in a correspondence I carried on with him in 1794 and '95. This correspondence was in part published in our Magazines for those years; to which I refer you. And Mr. Grant, in my late visits to him in London, again recommended them. The natives are not there divided into castes, and are a very docile people. But, alas! I shall have no missionaries to leave behind, unless you will be pleased to send me a couple. God will bless us, and bless me. O, send me two missionaries by the second India fleet, which sails about the latter end of January, or some time in February. Send them to me at Calcutta. When they arrive, let them inquire for me at the Rev. Thomas Thomason's, chaplain to the Honourable the East India Company, and at George Udney's, Esq., of Calcutta. The former of these is my spiritual child. To the latter I have a very warm letter of recommendation from his particular friend, Dr. Buchanan. The Calcutta ships sailing at the time above mentioned arrive almost constantly in Cal-

cutta in June ; generally about the time of the king's birthday, the 4th. I will make a point of being there before that time. If I have set off for Rajamahal, my friend Mr. Thomason, and also Mr. Udney, will send for me immediately ; if not, the missionaries themselves will send for or come to me. There will be no difficulty about it ; and I am sure that my friends above mentioned will interest themselves, and I will prepare them for it by letters and personal interviews. Please to get them licensed (and myself) for the continent of India. Mr. Charles Grant, No. 40, Russell-square, London, will do all he can for me in this business, if applied to ; and he is the most influential man in the Court of Directors. I am nearly certain that we shall succeed with the Court. If not, please to apply, through your committee, to the Board of Control. Lord Teignmouth, if applied to, will give us his influence, and he is a member of the Board. Mr. Wilberforce, whose influence is very considerable, will oblige me to the uttermost, if applied to. And, above all, please to let an application be made to the Earl of Liverpool, either personally or by letter. He may not make any promise, but I have not the least doubt but he will graciously interfere. I am certain we shall succeed by this mode. I will lend the money for the outfit ; or, rather than return home without having any to second my labours along the coast of Coromandel to Rajamahal, I will give the money necessary for the outfit. O, embrace the opportunity while I am over there ; and don't let me return home grieved to the heart that I have left Societies on the continent as lambs among wolves. Brother Slater, of the Redruth Circuit, is a man after my own heart. His friend, Solomon Whitworth, of the Scilly Isles, may do very well. Brother Sugden, if he be not married, will, I believe, do exceeding well. The getting the two preachers licensed for the continent is of more consequence than getting me licensed, though this latter is very desirable. I will prepare my worthy friend, Mr. Holloway, about lending or giving the money on my account for this blessed purpose. It is but two I ask for ; and don't imagine

that God will not bless me.—I am, my very dear and highly-respected Fathers and Brethren,

“Your very much obliged, affectionate, and faithful servant, friend, and brother,

“T. COKE.

“Postscript to the Rev. Mr. Reece.

“We do not touch at the Cape. Our line-of-battle ship is going to leave us for the Cape. I wanted to write to you, and therefore copied out the letter to the Conference, which I also send (a copy) to the president, the committee, Mr. Bunting, and Mr. Atmore. I have not a moment to spare. Love to Mrs. Reece, and all, all, all. Yours most faithfully.”

The remainder of the fleet now stretched away into the Indian Ocean. On Good Friday and the following Easter Sunday, in addition to their usual devotions, the missionaries in the “Cabalva” observed the holy communion, and felt that Jesus was still with His disciples on the waves. In these soul-refreshing exercises, they were joined by their brother and colleague Mr. Squance, who, in a declining state of health, had come from the “Melville” by Dr. Coke’s desire, and Captain Birch’s polite invitation, to stay with them for a little change.* The good Doctor watched over the health and welfare of his companions, as a father over that of his children. When Mr. and Mrs. Harvard were both seriously ill, his attentions were delicately consoling, and accompanied with fervent intercession. In the case of Mr. Squance, who had got much benefit through the change, but was still extremely weak in the lungs, his anxious care betrayed him on one

* The Rev. T. H. Squance has sent me the note he received on this occasion :—“I am excessively concerned in respect to you. Come to me. Come to me this afternoon. Bring your cot with you. Bring with you of wearing apparel what you can immediately lay your hands upon. I will at all events make you comfortable. Trust me, you may stay here as long a time or as little a time as you please. I will lend you wearing apparel, if you have a deficiency. Come without delay. My love, my sincere regards, to the brethren. My kindest and most respectful compliments to your worthy captain.”

occasion into an ebullition of feeling which gave them all some pain. He had strictly forbidden Mr. Squance to sing ; but in a visit which the latter had made to Mr. Harvard's cabin, it appears, some chanting had taken place. When this was known to Dr. Coke, he felt a warm displeasure, which expressed itself in strong reproaches to Mr. Harvard for permitting or encouraging the singing. Though this outbreak of feeling was to be regretted, it was caused by his affectionate solicitude ; and, as a characteristic of the generous and Christian principle of his mind, I ought to add, that he made before them, and some of the passengers who had witnessed the unpleasantness, an ample apology, explaining also that his feelings had been of late a great deal tried by the decease of Mrs. Ault, and the bodily indisposition of one and another of the party in whose welfare he was so deeply concerned. Mr. Squance returned to the "Melville" on the 15th of April.

About this time several men were lost in falling from the masts and spars, while the fury of the tempests rendered rescue impossible. On one day, the 20th, a man on board the "Melville" fractured his skull by a fall down the hatchway. Another was precipitated from the main-top-mast of the "Elphinstone," and perished in the sea ; and a third met a similar fate by falling overboard from the "Neptune."

On the 23d the monotony of sea and sky was relieved by a sight of the Island of Bourbon, which rose like a solemn vision, with a portentous grandeur created by the volcanic flame which towered from a lofty mountain far into the heavens, dying away in dense clouds of smoke, and then re-appearing, till the sea was lit up with a lurid glare.

The next day they were off the Isle of France, and on the 27th they passed within five miles of the island of Galega. The Doctor, as the period of their voyage seemed to be approaching, appeared to redouble his diligence in redeeming the time, and getting ready for the work which he believed to await him on the shores of the East. In the course of his

readings in the Portuguese Bible, (where he had a treasury of the truths, and the very words and sentences, he would want in preaching the Gospel in that language,) he had discovered many texts which admitted of a better rendering. Of these he made various memorandums, with the design of publishing in Ceylon a Conspectus of such emended passages. In Portuguese composition he was making very good progress, and had already written several discourses and prayers in it, as well as a metrical translation of about fifty of the Methodist hymns. Sometimes he would spend an hour with the missionaries in a Portuguese religious service, in which he would pray in that language, read his sermon, and join with them in singing a Portuguese hymn; exercises in which he manifested an immense delight. They contributed to give him the feeling of preparedness for immediate action as soon as he should find himself among the people of Ceylon.

But it was not to be. The servant of the Lord, weighed down with the toils of the past, was more than willing to begin anew. But the Divine Master, accepting the will for the deed, was about to send His angels to carry him to the place where the just, made free from the burden of the flesh, are in joy and felicity. While in the neighbourhood of the equator, Dr. Coke's health began to wear such signs of decline as to excite the apprehensions of his friends. Mr. Clough expressed his fears to the medical gentlemen of the ship, who concurred with him in the conviction that the Doctor's incessant application to study was undermining his constitution, and assured him that the same pursuits could not be carried on in that climate, at his time of life, without the most serious peril. Mr. Clough therefore joined both remonstrance and entreaty, and prevailed upon him to forego his books sometimes, and take an occasional relaxation. When anything occurred which would be likely to amuse him, as a shoal of flying-fish chased by a dolphin, the apparition of a whale, the catching of a shark, or the ship coming within hail of another, the affectionate Clough would hasten to the cabin,

and bring him out, merely for the sake of the refreshment it would afford him. At sunset, too, according to his old habit, he would pace the quarter-deck, and gaze on the beauty of the western sky. But he seldom stayed long, and retired again to his writing-table, and thence to his bed, that he might rise with the sun to resume his labours. All this time nature, too severely tasked, was losing its vital energy.

On the 1st of May, Mrs. Harvard, who, in taking the air on the quarter-deck, had met the Doctor, and walked with him some few minutes, remarked, on her return to the cabin of her sick husband, how concerned she was at the visible alteration in his countenance. In the evening, as usual, he looked in to visit and pray with them. He complained of what he called a little indisposition, and especially of feeling chill, which he attributed to his wearing fine linen shirts when damp from perspiration. Mrs. Harvard hereupon promised to provide him with some calico ones on their arrival at Bombay, and meanwhile pressed him to accept the use of some from the stock of Mr. Harvard. He acceded to the wish, and took a few with him to his own room. The next morning Mrs. Harvard, feeling uneasy about him, visited the Doctor. She found him sitting in a languid state in his elbow-chair, reclining his head on one of his hands. She expressed her regret to see him so indisposed; upon which, making an evident effort to assume a better appearance, he acknowledged that he had felt rather poorly, but believed it would soon pass away, and proposed a walk on deck. Here, however, his weakness became yet more visible, his wavering step and haggard looks betraying a most serious prostration.

At nightfall he paid them the accustomed evening visit. On entering, he observed that Mrs. Harvard was looking more cheerful than of late; and said, "Your countenance, sister Harvard, is a good barometer: I need not ask how brother Harvard is."

As he spoke, they saw in *his* countenance the sad prognostics of all that was the reverse of convalescence. "He

sat," writes Mr. Harvard, "for a short time in occasional conversation, but evidently in a state of great relaxation and debility. I was lying on the sofa-bed very weak, and imagined the Doctor experienced a momentary dejection. To give the conversation a cheerful tone, I observed to him how great an obligation he had conferred upon me in giving me so good a wife, and how considerably my recent affliction had been lessened by her affectionate offices. My attempt succeeded. His natural and amiable vivacity played again on his countenance. He then rose, as if to embrace the opportunity of parting from us with cheerfulness; and, taking us each by the hand, with a solemn but heavenly smile gave us his blessing. Thus closed our earthly intercourse."

The Doctor retired to his cabin, accompanied by Mr. Clough. Before lying down he requested to have some medicine brought from the chest, which he intended to take that night. This was done, and various arrangements were made by Mr. Clough for his comfort. The latter then requested to have permission to watch at his side all night; but the Doctor, thanking him, assured him it was not necessary, and expressed the hope of being better on the morrow. His voice was heard no more.

It had been his habit throughout the voyage to rise at half-past five; and, to insure the improvement of that early season for devotion and study, the servant who attended on him was always accustomed to call him at the appointed time.

At half-past five on the morning of the 3d of May, the faithful attendant stood as usual at the cabin-door, and knocked. He listened in vain for the customary acknowledgment. At length, moving the latch, he noiselessly entered the room, and, petrified with surprise and awe, beheld the form of the venerable servant of God stretched lifeless on the floor.

After recovering from the shock which this spectacle had given his bewildered feelings, the man hastened to communicate the discovery to Captain Birch, who, startled and per-

turbed by the intelligence, sent in the first place for Mr. Clough, and made him acquainted with what had come to pass. Mastering his own agitation, Mr. Clough proceeded to break the news to his colleague. Mr. Harvard, but slowly recovering from a fever, was in so debilitated a state as to render his friend the more anxious about the effect it would have upon him. "He endeavoured," writes Mr. Harvard, "to draw me out of my cabin, but in vain. I was too much the invalid to be moved at so early an hour without some very powerful cause. When he failed in this, he came and sat by my bedside. My wife was employed at the other end of our apartment. Immediately on his entrance she inquired if he had seen the Doctor,—a question which he evaded: but on her observing, she thought some one should go in and see him, as he was so poorly the night before, Mr. Clough wrote the following words with a pencil on a slip of paper, and held it before my eyes:—'Dr. Coke is dead!'

"I looked at him with amazement. 'O, no,' said I; 'it cannot be. Do not work on my feelings with a subject so serious.' In the midst of our mutual agitation Mrs. Harvard renewed her inquiries, and declared she would go herself and see him. With this intention she laid her hand on the door communicating with the Doctor's cabin, when Mr. Clough earnestly begged her to desist; adding, 'It is of no service for you to go in: the Doctor is not in a fit state for you to see him.....I must tell you plainly, Dr. Coke is dead!'

"Trembling from weakness and anxiety, I rose from my bed, and, having been assisted to dress by Mr. Clough, walked to the Doctor's cabin leaning on his arm. There, alas! I found the lifeless body of our beloved friend laid on the bed. It appeared but little discomposed. A placid smile rested on his countenance; the head was turned a little on one side, while the stain from a stream of blood which had flowed from his mouth remained on his right cheek. O, what did I feel, while gazing on that sight! A crowd of thoughts rushed upon me like a rolling torrent. On the one hand, I viewed

our friend and leader suddenly called away from us ; on the other, our own situation as missionaries rendered the most responsible and painful. I was, notwithstanding, blessed with a rising confidence in God, and could breathe out, in the midst of our trial, 'Thy will be done.'

"Wishing to know the immediate cause of our afflictive bereavement, I requested the surgeon of the ship to give us his opinion. Upon examining the body, he considered death to have been occasioned by apoplexy. It was supposed that he must have risen in the night, either to call some of us or to reach something, and that he fell in the position in which he was found. His death took place, doubtless, before midnight, as the body, when discovered, was quite cold and stiff. The easy dismissal with which he was evidently favoured afforded us some consolation, since neither Captain Birch nor myself heard any struggling or noise, which we must certainly have done, had there been any, as our cabins adjoined his, divided only from it by a very thin wainscot.

"Captain Birch, kindly sympathizing with us in our affliction, had, unsolicited by us, had a boat prepared to carry the information to the 'Melville,' and to bring the other members of our mission on board the 'Cabalva.' I wrote a note to them, to prepare their minds ; and so considerate was the captain, that though the usual time for making the signal of a decease to the fleet is nine o'clock, yet, unwilling to have their minds agitated before they had been previously prepared by my letter, he delayed the signal till they had arrived on board. The fleet was then telegraphed that the Reverend Doctor Coke had departed this life."

One of the missionaries in the "Melville," adverting to the reception of Mr. Harvard's note, says, "When it was read, all were as though thunderstruck : seized with a kind of stupor, the brethren felt that they could scarcely believe what they read. While thus exercised, sometimes gazing at the note, and then at each other, the surgeon of the 'Melville' entered their cabin with a letter from Mr. Birch to Captain Lockner,

stating the melancholy fact. All their fears were now realized, and they hastened to their brethren on board the 'Cabalva.'"

I will give the rest in Mr. Harvard's own narrative. "Our interview was solemn and affecting. We felt as children chastened in the presence of our heavenly Father. None knew how to speak the first, or, when he spoke, what to say. We were sensible of our peculiar situation, and could only exclaim, 'How unsearchable are Thy judgments, O Lord!'

"All personal considerations, however, were for the time swallowed up in a vortex of grief for the fate of their departed friend; but from this they felt they should rise to the consideration of the imminent duty they owed to the venerable dead. Their first wish respecting his remains was, that suitable measures should be adopted for their transmission to England for interment in the tomb of his family at Brecon. They not only considered that this would be proper in itself, but they had learned that the Doctor himself had cherished a wish that, if he died away from England, such a plan might, if possible, be adopted. After consultation with one another, they resolved to seek the advice and concurrence of Captain Birch; and Messrs. Ault and Clough went to him for that purpose. They stated it to him, not only as their own desire, but also as the frequently expressed wish of the deceased. The captain, with much serious feeling, explained to them, that though he himself should be equally desirous with them that such an arrangement might be effected, yet, as they were on an outward instead of a homeward voyage, in a sultry climate, within two degrees of the equator, and a crowded ship, he felt it a duty to do violence to his inclinations, in begging them to forego their own, and consent to the usual mode of the burial of the dead at sea.*

* This decision, which appears to have been very necessary, excited nevertheless much regret in England, not only among the friends of Dr. Coke in the Methodist communion, but among many others, and some of them in the highest ranks of society, who had learned to respect and love him. As an instance, I may mention what a lady, the daughter of Mr. Bruce, an intimate friend of Dr.

“The missionaries could say nothing to these arguments; and, however reluctant, were constrained to admit their validity, and, on further deliberation, to intimate to Captain Birch that they were obliged to resign themselves to the necessity of the occasion. He hereupon desired them to adopt their own mode with respect to the solemnity of the funeral; and requested them, in a note, to let him know how they intended it to be conducted, as ‘all on board wished to show every respect to the memory of so excellent a man.’”

The arrangements in these cases are, of necessity, too simple to need a long description. A massive deal coffin was constructed by the ship’s carpenter, with perforations which would facilitate the admission of water, and the exclusion of air, to prevent it from floating on the waves, and to insure the descent of the coffin to the deep bottom of its vast liquid tomb; while two cannon-balls enclosed in bags were laid at the head and two more at the feet of the corpse, to make this result the more certain. These dismal preparations having been completed, the coffin, about five in the afternoon, was slowly borne up to the leeward gangway, and lay covered over with signal-flags. An awning had been spread, as on Sabbath-day at worship-time. The soldiers were now drawn up in rank on deck; at the tolling of the ship’s bell the crew gathered in silence; and the passengers, truly affected, assembled round the bier of their lamented companion. The office for the dead at sea was then commenced by Mr. Harvard, and at the proper moment all that was mortal of this dearly beloved servant of God was consigned to the depths.*

Coke, has communicated to me: namely, that, shortly after the news of the Doctor’s decease reached England, the ex-chancellor Lord Erskine called on her father, to learn all the particulars; and, when told of the funeral at sea, expressed his opinion, with great warmth of manner, that “it was a shame that so good and great a man should have been consigned to the ocean;” adding, that, “though not a rich man,” he himself “would not have minded two or three hundred pounds,” could he have been the means of sparing the body from such a fate.

* Latitude 2° 29’ south; longitude 59° 29’ east. Note 26.

Never were the words of the Voice that was heard from heaven more worthily echoed than then: "Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord. Yea, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."

Just then—and a fit emblem and accompaniment was it of the disappearing from among men of one who had been the means of enlightenment to myriads—the sun went down behind the Indian flood. The rapid tropical shadows gathered like a pall over the scene; and the ocean, whose waves Coke had so often traversed in fulfilling the grand labours of his life, now opened an asylum to his remains, till the sea shall give up its dead.

When this eventful day had passed, the missionaries, prostrate in grief, felt, with the more entire consciousness of their bereavement, the necessity of drawing near to God. The good captain looked in to condole with them, and, advertng to actual circumstances, inquired whether they were aware of the existence of any will or other disposition of his affairs made by Dr. Coke; and stated that, should such a document not be extant, the law would constitute him, the captain, the executor of the deceased. He would therefore advise an early examination of the Doctor's papers, and proposed that, till they should find themselves adequate to the undertaking, he would put a seal on all the effects; and that, when they were ready, the purser of the ship should attend as his representative in the investigation. It was his hope that a will would be found, as he should be happy to be exempted from the office of executor.

Two days after, they addressed themselves to the mournful task, but among the Doctor's papers no will was found. The fact was, as already stated, he had made his will in England; but they were in expectation of meeting with some draft, copy, or attestation of its existence among his papers. There was a schedule of his property, signed by his solicitor in London, and a statement of the sums for which he would be enabled, when in India, to draw upon his bankers in England. But neither

of these documents could give the missionaries any power or assistance. Such papers as related to the mission the captain delivered up to them, and of all besides he took possession officially on behalf of the heirs or executors at home.

The missionaries felt themselves in these circumstances called upon for the exercise of all their faith in the Providence of Him who has said to His ministers, "Lo, I am with you alway." One human prop after another was taken away, that they might learn to stand alone, trusting in the Lord. They had understood from Dr. Coke that, on embarkation, he had placed four hundred pounds in the care of Captain Birch, to be repaid him in India currency at the termination of the voyage. Mr. Birch now referred to this sum, and stated his conviction that it was designed to be devoted to the expenses of the mission; "yet, as it had been lodged in the Doctor's own name, and as his own property, he could not legally pay it to them, unless some document could be found authorizing him so to do, as, in the absence of such an instrument, he must be held responsible for the sum to the executors of the Doctor's estate in England." They had hoped that this sum would be available towards their support in Ceylon, to which they were approaching, with scarcely a guinea among them: but this expectation was, to all appearance, cut off.*

Mr. Birch, perceiving the depressing effect of these communications on the minds of the preachers, endeavoured to inspirit them by the assurance that he would do all in his power with some of the leading members of the Bombay government on their behalf; and that in Ceylon he had no doubt the government itself, upon a proper representation of their case, would afford them encouragement and support. He was himself acquainted with the governor of Bombay, and would introduce two of them in person to His Excellency, pre-

* "We received this communication nearly in silence. We saw the perfect propriety of the remark. But this sum was the last prop upon which we had leaned for immediate support. 'Now,' said Mr. Clough, when the captain had withdrawn,—'Now it is ALL TRUST.'"

viously sending the recommendatory letters with which they had been furnished, and another of his own to the governor, describing the character, designs, and death of Dr. Coke. Moreover, that a gentleman of Bombay, W T. Money, Esq., to whom they held a letter from Dr. Buchanan, was a person well known to himself as a man of religion and benevolence, who, he had no doubt, would be willing to make the advances to them that might be necessary. And, as if to dispel their lingering fears, he told them that, rather than they should suffer embarrassment, he would allow them to draw upon himself, and accept their bills.* These kindnesses merit an honourable record. One of the passengers, also, a judge in the presidency of Bombay, united with Captain Birch in encouraging their hopes, not only of temporal support in their present difficulties, but of a successful opening for the more important object of their mission to the East.

Nor were these grateful expectations disappointed. On the 21st of May the guns of the fortress of Bombay welcomed the fleet from its voyage of twenty weeks, and the missionaries landed on the Indian shore. To show the gravity of the cares which had risen before them, in the matter of their temporal support, I may mention the fact that they landed almost penniless, and were unable to meet the expenses of their first meal at an inn. It was therefore with no little anxiety that Mr. Harvard waited on Mr. Money, the mercantile gentleman already named. He shall tell his own tale. "Mr. Money had not yet come to the office, but was expected in half-an-hour; and I was shown into his apartment to wait his arrival. As soon I had taken a seat, the peculiarity of my intended application struck my view. I was about to request a commercial man to advance money with no other security but our assurance that it should be repaid. Losing sight for a moment of our recommendatory letters, the absence of a letter of credit seemed to render the success of any application

* When at Bombay, he ascertained himself authorized to pay them the four hundred pounds.

impossible, and I anticipated a refusal with a smile at our simplicity. I endeavoured, however, to dismiss these distressing thoughts, and to lift up my heart to God. I presently heard the sound of footsteps.....When Mr. Money entered the room, his appearance at once relieved my anxiety. Looking with much kindness, he inquired if my name was Harvard, and, requesting me to take a seat, said he was glad to see me. I took out my pocket-book to present Captain Birch's note of introduction, when he said, 'Mr. Harvard, I am perfectly acquainted with all the circumstances of your situation. Your excellent captain has breakfasted with me this morning: he has given me every necessary information, and I shall be very happy to advance you any money on the credit of your Society at home.'"

In the course of conversation this worthy gentleman, making Mr. Harvard understand that he was a firm friend to the cause of Christianity in India, invited him to explain the measures they had in contemplation in forming the mission, and in return gave him some important advice and directions.

The next morning Captain Birch introduced them to his excellency the governor, Sir Evan Nepean, by whom they were received with much urbanity, and invited to breakfast; at which there happened to be present several military officers, and some persons of rank in the civil service. The recommendatory letters which had already come to his hand had explained to the governor their connexion with Methodism; and, in adverting to it, he spoke in terms of great veneration of the character and labours of Mr. Wesley, whom he had himself seen when young. Among other compliments, he said that he concurred in the high sense which the British government had ever entertained of Mr. Wesley's principles and proceedings, and added that the late Lord North did not hesitate to attribute much of the loyalty and contentment which prevailed in England to the sound principles and indefatigable exertions of that great ecclesiastic. As to themselves, Sir Evan told them they should be well taken care of in Bombay

till they could conveniently proceed to Ceylon. Nor were these empty words, as he immediately offered them the use of one of his own houses, and throughout the period of their sojourn showed them every practical kindness. The missionaries were penetrated with gratitude. When re-assembled by themselves, they literally wept for joy, "thankful to the excellent and honourable men who had befriended us, but, above all, for the interference of Providence in our behalf. We fell upon our knees, and, after praying for the Divine blessing on those who had succoured us, we offered our thanks and ourselves unreservedly to Almighty God, to whose service and glory we consecrated the remainder of our days."

So, too, when after about a month they found their way to their destined sphere of labour in Ceylon, the same Divine mercy prevented them in all their ways, and furthered them with continual help. Lord Molesworth, a nobleman whose heart the grace of God had touched,* and who at that time was commandant of the military station at Point de Galle, had heard of the mission with pleasure, and gave them his friendly countenance; while, to their grateful delight, they found that Sir Evan Nepean had written favourably of them to his excellency General Brownrigg, the governor of Ceylon, who, with a distinguished liberality, had given directions that the Government-House in the fort of Galle should be prepared for their reception. Never, in a word, was a Christian mission inaugurated under more favourable circumstances, so far as human concurrence seemed to be required; so that without distraction or hindrance they were enabled to form their plans of operation, and to enter with promptitude and effective zeal upon their hallowed and hopeful work. The manner in which the mission was established, and the good fruit that it almost at once began to bear, are described in the well-written narrative of Mr. Harvard; and the progress of the work to its present state of massive strength and inexpressible utility has

* See Note 27.

been chronicled from year to year in the annals of the Society. Take one fact :—At the commencement of the Methodist mission at Batticaloa, there were five hundred Buddhist temples well supplied. Meanwhile the agencies of our own and of other Churches have been at work, and there are now but fifty, which are fast falling into decay.

These last details are supplementary to the Life of Dr. Coke in one view, but not in another. They serve to show that his attempt to go to Ceylon was the fulfilment of a Divine purpose. He had a deep conviction that he was called to the undertaking ; and, though the manner in which it was accomplished did not fall out exactly as he could have thought, the accomplishment itself, in the manner in which Providence willed, proves that in the contemplation of the great and good work he was not indulging a chimerical dream.

The Ceylonese mission may therefore be considered as the crowning achievement of his life. In the labours of the missionaries whom he had been the means of raising up for the work, and whom he had led in person towards their destined sphere, he himself may still be said to labour and to live. The same remark applies also to those other numerous missions which to all human appearance, without his resolute and heroic efforts, would never have existed.

The true *éloge* of Doctor Thomas Coke is to be found in his LIFE ; and the humble but authentic record of its actions I have given on these pages is the most reverential tribute I can offer to his name. The Roman poet declared himself free of the usual expedients to perpetuate the memory of the dead, assured, as he said, that he should live upon the lips of passing generations.* The truly great and good need no panegyric from ink or pen : “Ye,” says the Apostle Paul, appealing to the churches which had risen into being by the benediction of Heaven on his labours,—“Ye are our epistle.”

* “*Nemo me lacrymis decoret, neque funera fletu
Faxit : cur ? Volito vivus per ora virum.*”—Ennius.

So, at this day, in many a church in the east and west there rises the memorial of Coke's apostleship. What Gregory Nazianzen writes of the holy Basil, may be as truly affirmed of him: "Each converted sinner is his historian, each sheltered outcast his biographer." We may learn what he was from what he did, and the spirit in which it was done. And who can look upon the spectacle without reverence and love? In Dr. Coke we see a man of refined sensibilities, of generous heart and incorruptible integrity, earnestly dedicating his entire existence to the glory of God and the welfare of mankind; a man who, though not gifted with very extraordinary endowments of intellect or of fortune, became great by patient labour in doing good, with steadfast faithfulness to the sense of that duty to Christ and the world He has redeemed, the dictates of which the Holy Spirit had written on his heart, as the finger of God had traced the Decalogue on the tablets of Sinai.

We should take into account, also, the reflex influence of his conduct on the dispositions and activities of the church. We, of to-day, feel and manifest its effects not only in his own communion, but in those other branches of the Christian commonwealth in which missionary operations are now carried on with a spirit and perseverance unknown since the apostolic age. Those great associations by whose wide-spread agencies peace and justice, truth and knowledge, religion and piety, are unfolding their blessed fruitage in the moral wastes of the world, owe not a little to the inspirations of his glorious example. The founders of some of them heard his words, considered the end of his conversation, caught his spirit, and emulated his faith; and we, who have followed them, should walk by the same evangelic rule and mind the same things.

Nor will the history we now close be without most precious uses, if young Christians who may read it shall receive, while they read, any influences of the spirit of this true servant of the Lord, and feel the stirrings of a love for that sacred cause for which he lived and died; the movements in their souls of

that twice-blest principle of mercy which makes a man better, while it makes him a blessing, that will lead them to seek a part for themselves in the oblations and toils of a service to God and humanity which gives the pledge of happiness to the future, while it adorns and ennobles the lives of the living, and sanctifies the urns of the dead.

The diffusion of the truth which can make all men wise to salvation is a supreme and all-comprising charity, whose beautiful effects will unfold themselves more and more in the ages of eternity, and will have given to the days of time itself their best and brightest character. In furthering this work, the people of God, whatever discouragements they may have to confront, need not fear that their labour shall be in vain in the Lord. In sustaining the missions of Christianity, they act with the sanction of a Divine command,—“Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature;” with the encouragement of a Divine promise,—“Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world;” and with the assurance of a Divine declaration, not uttered by the lips of a human prophet, but by the Son of God Himself, that “this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness,” AND BE FOLLOWED BY THE REVELATION OF THE KINGDOM ITSELF.

Living as we are in the very time in which the Lord is giving the word, and the company of them who publish it are telling their message, in ever-increasing numbers, in almost all the languages of the earth, we have the most solemn reason to believe that this consummation is nigh, even at the door. The evangelist is the precursor of the great King. His voice cries in the wilderness, “Prepare the way of the Lord;” and the fulfilment of his message in the ear of listening nations brings in the hour of that great intervention of the providence, power, and presence of the redeeming God which, though ushered in with the thunders of judgment, will clear the sky, and dispel, by the full beams of the Light which lightens the Gentiles, the gloom and grief of the social world. For who

that reads the oracle aright does not understand that the retributions then to fall upon Antichrist are to be followed by that outpouring of the Spirit of God which will revive and renew the repentant nations? With what fervent desire, what expectant hope, should we plead the promise of the Father, and invoke the presence of the Holy One! *Veni, Creator, Spiritus!* With Thy blest advent there come the Sabbath of the weary, and the jubel-song of the free.

“When Thy coming is at hand,
Let the heavens pour on the winds
Odours sweet, and perfumes bland,
Of all kinds,
With honey and with manna showers ;
Till this dreary world of ours
Shall enjoy a beauteous spring,
To which time no end shall bring.”

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES.

Note I.—Page 4.

THE great-grandfather of Dr. Coke was Henry Cooke, of Wernchwith, in Radnorshire. His son Edward took holy orders, and became rector of Llanfyrnach, near Brecon. He was the father of Bartholomew. Many English family-names have had a mutable orthography. Some branches of the Cokes of Norfolk spell their name Cooke. Bartholomew, on the other hand, was the first of his line to omit the letter o, and spell the name Coke. He married the daughter of Thomas Phillips, Esq., of Trostre. On the death of the Doctor, the line of the Welsh Cokes became extinct; but his mother's family are still represented by the Phillippes of Pont-y-Wall, near Talgarth.

Note II.—Page 4.

HE was bailiff in 1737; alderman, 1738; bailiff, 1758; alderman, 1759-61; justice of peace, 1768.

Note III.—Page 4.

HE attended many of the respectable families of the county, and among others that of the Gwynnes of Garth, one of whom became the wife of the Rev. Charles Wesley.

Note IV.—Page 6.

MR. CHURCHEY, whose profession was that of the law, had in his younger days a great predilection for the *belles lettres*. With but few of the higher attributes of the true poet, he was a hard-working versifier, and, among other achievements in that way, composed an immense heroic poem, in ten thousand lines, on the Life of Joseph.

Before venturing on publication, he wrote to Mr. Cowper to ask his advice. Cowper replied by assuring him that if he found relaxation and solace from the dry business of the law in the cultivation of elegant literature, he was perfectly right in so employing his leisure; and as to publication, if Mr. Churchey had money to lose in that kind of adventure, he had an unquestionable right to spend it in such a manner. He did so. But the reviewers, bad men, showed him no pity. His best friend in the business was Mr. Wesley, who obtained a hundred subscribers for his poem, at a guinea each copy. He appears to have become acquainted with the Methodists about the same time that Coke did. It was the wish of the latter that his friend should forsake the law for the Gospel, and enter the ministry of the Church of England. In a letter to him on the subject, in 1776, he explains to him the course to be adopted for admission to orders as a Literate; and calls upon him, by the love of Jesus, to dedicate his life to His service. "I do it for the sake of Jesus Christ, because it appears to me that you will be an acquisition to the ministry; and an eternity of the most zealous service will not be sufficient to compensate for one drop of the blood He so freely spilt upon the cross. The harvest, my friend, is very great, and the faithful labourers very few."

Note V.—Page 7.

MATRICULATION.—In former times students were admitted at Oxford at an earlier age. Sir Philip Sydney entered at fourteen; Richard Carew, author of the Survey of Cornwall, at eleven. Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, took his master's degree when but sixteen years old.

Note VI.—Page 8.

CYRIL JACKSON, dean of Christchurch, a man much loved in private life, exerted a high degree of influence in the Church. He was the means of elevating others to the bench of bishops, but always declined to ascend it for himself. The wishes he cherished for himself are described in his well-known lines :—

*" Si mihi, si liceat producere leniter ævum,
 Nec pompam, nec opes, nec mihi regna petam.
 Vellem, ut Divini pandens mysteria verbi,
 Vitam in secreto rure quietus agam.
 Adsint et Graiæ comites Latiaque Camœnæ,
 Et lepidâ faveat conjuge lætus Hymen.
 Tum satis ; æternum spes, cura, timorque, valete ;
 Hoc tantum superest—Discere posse mori."*

" O could my days unruffled glide away !
 I ask no pomp, nor wealth, nor princely sway ;
 The sacred word unsealing, and sincere
 In faith, a pastor to my people dear :
 And while the classic muse gives zest to life,
 Chaste Hymen link me to a cheerful wife.
 Enough. Far hence hope, fear, anxiety ;
 And leave me only—To learn how to die."

Note VII.—Page 18.

MAYOR OF BRECON.—In the old rate-book for the borough there are several entries, for the years 1770 and 1771, in his handwriting, signed by him as Thomas Coke, bailiff ; in others, as alderman ; and one, in 1771, as justice of the peace.

Note VIII.—Page 22.

MR. COKE's first curacy was, I believe, the parish of Road, in Somersetshire, from whence he was transferred to South-Petherton. We will transcribe here, for preservation, his letters of admission to both orders :—

(I.) " By the tenor of these presents, We, Robert, by Divine permission Bishop of Oxford, do make it known unto all men, that upon Sunday the tenth day of June, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and seventy, We, the bishop aforesaid, solemnly administering holy orders under the protection of the Almighty in our cathedral church of Christ, did admit our beloved in Christ, Thomas Coke, A.B., of Jesus College, Oxford, (of whose virtuous and pious life and conversation, and competent learning and knowledge in the Holy Scriptures, we were well assured,) into the Holy Order of Deacons, in the manner and form prescribed and used

by the Church of England, and him, the said Thomas Coke, did then and there rightly and canonically ordain a deacon: He having first in our presence, and in due form of law, taken the oaths appointed by law to be taken for and instead of the oath of supremacy and allegiance; and he likewise having freely and voluntarily subscribed to the thirty-nine articles of religion, and to the three articles contained in the thirty-sixth canon. In testimony whereof we have caused our episcopal seal to be hereunto affixed, the day and year above written, and the third year of our translation.

(Signed) "R. OXFORD."

(II.) "Be it known unto all men by these presents, that We, Charles, by Divine permission Bishop of St. David's, holding by the assistance of Almighty God a general ordination on Sunday the twenty-third day of August, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and seventy-two, in the chapel of St. John Baptist, within our palace of Abergwilly, did, at the request of the Right Rev. Edward, Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells, admit our beloved in Christ, Thomas Coke, of Jesus College, in Oxford, M.A., (of whose virtuous and pious life and conversation, and competent learning and knowledge in the Holy Scriptures, the said Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells and Us have been well assured,) into the Holy Order of Priests, according to the manner and form prescribed and used by the Church of England, and him, the said Thomas Coke, did then and there rightly and canonically ordain a Priest: He having first in our presence, and in due form of law, taken the oaths appointed by law to be taken for and instead of the oath of supremacy; and he likewise having freely and voluntarily subscribed to the thirty-nine articles of religion, and to the three articles contained in the thirty-ninth canon. In testimony whereof we have caused our episcopal seal to be hereunto affixed. Dated the day and year above written, and in the sixth year of our consecration.

"CHARLES ST. DAVID'S."

Note IX.—Page 100.

MR. ALEXANDER KNOX, in a letter to Southey, appended to the last edition of the Life of Wesley, makes the same assertion:

“That Dr. Coke urged Mr. Wesley to this procedure I know with certainty from the Doctor himself; and full acquaintance with this well-meaning but very inconsiderate man makes me feel that Mr. Wesley could scarcely have had a more unfortunate adviser. The argument by which Mr. Wesley wrought himself to comply with Dr. Coke’s wish is in itself an evidence that his reasoning faculty had entirely failed.” We can form a judgment of the case from the facts as stated in the text. Mr. Wesley first, and unexpectedly, proposed the measure to Dr. Coke. The latter, after mature consideration, concurred in the project; but, in order to be able to carry it more fully to a successful issue, desired Mr. Wesley to invest him with an authentic and solemn authorization by ordaining him to the office of a Methodist superintendent. It was to this circumstance alone that Dr. Coke must have referred in his conversation with Mr. Knox. That gentleman insinuates that Mr. Wesley’s compliance with this request can only be accounted for by his having through extreme age fallen into mental imbecility. It may not be irrelevant to observe that at this time Mr. Wesley’s vigour both of body and mind was as yet remarkably unimpaired. In a letter now before me, written more than a year afterwards, (February, 1785,) to Mr. Barry of Nova-Scotia, he tells him, “I am in the enjoyment of such health as I have never had before. Mr. Henry said, ‘I bless God that I am never tired *of* my work, yet I am often tired *in* my work.’ By the blessing of God, I can say more: I am never tired *in* my work. From the beginning of the day, or the week, or the year, to the end, I do not know what weariness means. I am never weary of writing, or preaching, or travelling, but am just as fresh at the end as at the beginning. Thus it is with me to-day, and I take no thought for to-morrow. I am in hopes Dr. Coke will come to you.”

Note X.—Page 106.

THIS “slowness of proceeding” was exemplified in the case of the American Protestant Episcopal Church. So far back as 1783 they had begun a movement for obtaining a bishop or bishops by consecration in England; but it was not till 1787 that they succeeded in that quarter. Dr. Seabury, failing in his negotiations

with the English bench, obtained ordination from the non-juring bishops in Scotland. Coke and Asbury had then already commenced their episcopacy in America. Subsequently Dr. White and Dr. Prevost came to England to obtain consecration. The Archbishop of Canterbury told them that it would be expected of them to take the oath of allegiance. Applying for advice to Franklin, at that time envoy from the United States to France, he wished to ascertain whether they could not receive episcopal ordination from the bishops of the Gallican Church, but was informed that in such a case it would be necessary for the postulants to vow obedience to the Archbishop of Paris. He then consulted the Pope's Nuncio as to the possibility of their obtaining consecration from the Roman Catholic bishops in America; but was straightway assured that no Catholic bishop in America would lay hands on them unless they conformed to the Catholic Church. Franklin's advice thereupon was that "either the Episcopalian clergy in America should become Presbyterians, or that they should elect a bishop for themselves."

Note XI.—Page 110.

FREEBORN GARRETTSON, a gentleman of good family and ample estate, converted to God in his early manhood by the instrumentality of one of the first Methodist preachers in America, dedicated his entire remaining life to the work of the Gospel. He was a man who had the gentleness of a child combined with the zeal of an apostle and the heroic patience of a martyr. "My lot," says he in a letter to Mr. Wesley, "has mostly been in new places, to form circuits, which much exposed me to persecution. Once I was imprisoned; twice beaten; left on the highway speechless and senseless, and must have gone into the world of spirits, had not God in mercy sent a good Samaritan, that bled and took me to a friend's house; once shot at; guns and pistols presented at my breast; once delivered from an armed mob, in the dead-time of night, on the highway, by a surprising flash of lightning; surrounded frequently by mobs; stoned frequently. I have had to escape for my life at night. O! shall I ever forget the Divine Hand which has supported me?"

All this, while comparatively young : but he lived to go through much more. By his long labours Methodism was greatly extended through the north-eastern provinces of America. Referring, in the fiftieth year of his ministry, to the course he had been thus far enabled to complete, he says : “I traversed the mountains and valleys frequently on foot with my knapsack on my back, guided by Indian paths in the wilderness, when it was not expedient to take a horse ; and I had often to wade through morasses half a leg deep in mud and water ; frequently satisfying my hunger with a piece of bread and pork from my knapsack, quenching my thirst from a brook, and resting my weary limbs on the leaves of the trees. Thanks be to God ! He compensated me for all my toil ; for many precious souls were awakened and converted.”

Note XII.—Page 142.

THE last letter, probably, which Mr. Wesley ever wrote, was addressed to Mr. Wilberforce :—

“Unless the Divine power has raised you up to be as *Athanasius contra mundum*, I see not how you can go through your glorious enterprise, in opposing that execrable villany, which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature. Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But, ‘if God be for you, who can be against you?’ Are all of them together stronger than God? O ‘be not weary in well doing!’ Go on, in the name of God and in the power of His might, till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it.

“Reading this morning a tract, wrote by a poor African, I was particularly struck by that circumstance,—that a man who has a black skin, being wronged or outraged by a white man, can have no redress ; it being a law, in all our colonies, that the oath of a black against a white goes for nothing. What villany is this !”

Wesley’s “Thoughts on Slavery,” published in 1774, conclude with these solemn appeals :—“O Thou God of love, Thou who art loving to every man, and whose mercy is over all Thy works ; Thou who art the Father of the spirits of all flesh, and

who art rich in mercy unto all ; Thou who hast mingled of one blood all the nations upon earth ; have compassion upon these outcasts of men, who are trodden down as dung upon the earth ! Arise, and help these that have no helper, whose blood is spilt upon the ground like water ! Are not these also the work of Thine own hands, the purchase of Thy Son's blood ? Stir them up to cry unto Thee in the land of their captivity ; and let their complaint come up before Thee ; let it enter into Thy ears ! Make even those that lead them away captive to pity them ; and turn their captivity as the rivers in the south. O, burst Thou all their chains in sunder ; more especially the chains of their sins ! Thou Saviour of all, make them free, that they may be free indeed ! ”

Note XIII.—Page 165.

“ ON the 17th of January, 1758, twenty-eight years before this voyage of Coke, Mr. Wesley preached at Wandsworth, near London. He was heard by an eminent West-India planter who was seeking health there,—Nathaniel Gilbert, a lawyer, and speaker of the House of Assembly in Antigua. The hearts of the planter and two of his female slaves were touched by the word of the preacher. Wesley baptized the two slaves, one of whom, he says, was the first regenerated African he had ever seen ; and, as he records the fact, he utters the prediction, since in such rapid process of fulfilment,—‘ Shall not His saving health be made known to all nations ? ’ ”—Stevens, vol. ii., p. 355.

Note XIV.—Page 178.

THE following letters belong to this time. They relate to an attempt to introduce service in the chapel at Whitefriars-street, in Dublin, where Dr. Coke was then making a visitation :—

THE REV. JOHN WESLEY TO MR. MOORE.

“ LEEDS, *May 6th*, 1788.

“ DEAR HENRY,

“ THE Doctor is too warm. He ought to have had more regard to so respectable a body of men as applied to him.

“ I am a Church-of-England man ; and as I said fifty years ago,

so I say still, in the Church I will live and die, unless I am thrust out. We must have no more service at Whitefriars in the church-hours. Leave all contention before it be meddled with. Follow after peace."

"WHITEHAVEN, *May 11th*, 1788.

"DEAR HENRY,

"STILL, the more I reflect, the more I am convinced that the Methodists ought not to leave the Church. I judge that to lose a thousand, yea, ten thousand, of our people, would be less evil than this. 'But many had much comfort in this.' So they would in any new thing. I believe Satan himself would give them comfort herein; for he knows what the end would be. Our glory has hitherto been not to be a separate body.

"But, whatever Mr. Smith does, I am for the old way. I advise you to abide in it, till you find another new event, although indeed you may expect it every day; namely, the removal of

"Your affectionate friend and brother,

"J. WESLEY."

"GLASGOW, *May 12th*, 1788.

"DEAR HENRY,

"I ALLOW two points: 1. That while Dr. Coke is in Dublin, he may have service at eleven o'clock, as before. 2. That on condition that our brethren will attend St. Patrick's one Sunday in four, you may read prayers the other three in the room. When Dr. Coke returns from Dublin, he should immediately send me word who is proper to succeed you there. I shall be glad, if I can, to have Nancy and you at Bristol next year. It is not unlikely that I may finish my course there; and if so, I should love to have her to close my eyes. My brother said I should follow him within the year. But, be that as it may, by God's help I will live to-day."

TO THE REV. DR. COKE, AT DUBLIN.

"*May 16th*, 1788.

"DEAR SIR,

"I CAME hither this morning. There is a fair opportunity at Dumfries, and a prospect of much good. I like your proposal

concerning Mr. Cownley; and will talk with him about it, if I live to see Newcastle.

“As I said before, I say still, I cannot, I dare not, leave the Church, for the reasons agreed to thirty years ago at the Conference at Leeds.

“Thus far only I can, on condition that our people would all receive the Lord’s Supper once a month either at St. Patrick’s or their own parish-churches, (the reasonableness of which should be strongly and largely explained,)—on this condition, I would allow Henry Moore to read the Morning Service at Whitefriars on the other Sundays. I wonder at the imprudence of Mr. —, to say nothing of his unkindness. You did well in changing the stewards at Waterford.

“I am, dear sir, yours most affectionately,

“J. WESLEY.”

Note XV.—Page 221.

IN the Life of Mr. Wilberforce, along with the statement of the very pleasing fact that that excellent man, amid a multitude of other good works, gave an annual allowance to the widow of Mr. Charles Wesley, it is intimated that the Methodist ministers themselves had left that lady destitute of any pecuniary aid. An allegation this, founded in mistake. The kindly offices of the Conference toward her and hers continued to the end. I have here a letter bearing upon a transaction which of itself will be sufficient to absolve the preachers from the odious charge implied in the above reference. It is written from the Bristol Conference to Mrs. Charles Wesley, on July 31st, 1794.

“MADAM,

“THE Conference desire us to inform you that if you will return to them the £2,000 principal, which they have paid you, they will give you security for the payment of five *per cent.* to yourself during life, and for the payment of £2,000 to your children at your death; although they are above a thousand pounds in debt,

which they borrowed in order to pay you the principal before mentioned, and for which they pay five *per cent.* interest.

“We are, &c.,

“THOMAS HANBY, *President.*

“THOMAS COKE, *Secretary.*”

It appears from Mr. Jackson's Memoirs of the Rev. C. Wesley, that her brother-in-law, the Founder of Methodism, had secured to her an annuity of one hundred pounds per annum. At her request the Conference paid her the principal, instead of the annuity. “When it was known that the property had been expended, the Methodist Conference renewed to her another annuity: they also gave an annuity to her daughter, then to her son Charles, and at last to Samuel. It would not be difficult to show that Mr. Charles Wesley and his family received from the Methodists, in consideration of the benefits derived from his incomparable hymns, not less than ten thousand pounds.”

Note XVI.—Page 228.

“I SPENT about five weeks in France with two of our French preachers, one from Jersey and one from Guernsey. In Normandy we had some success. About eight hundred of the French Protestants in the neighbourhood of Caen put themselves under our instruction. Thirty of them, who manifested good desires, we united in class: six of those were deeply awakened. I have left the two preachers to labour in Normandy. One of them I took with me to Paris; but our success in that dissolute city was not equal to our expectations.”—Letter to Churchey, December, 1791.

Note XVII.—Page 231.

DR. COKE performed but few ordinations, except in America and the West Indies. The ordination of the two French preachers seems to be alluded to in this minute of Conference, as not having had the previous appointment of that body. But in a letter of the president, Mr. Thompson, to Mr. Moore, (from Wakefield, December 13th, 1791,) I find the following postscript:—“Give my respects to Dr. Coke, and tell him I ask his pardon; for, as he consulted the District-Meeting before he ordained the persons for France, no one has a just cause to find fault.”

To give his ordinations full influence, the Doctor accompanied them with a certificate or letter of orders. We transcribe two of them as examples :—

1. FOR A DEACON.

“KNOW all men whom it may concern, that on the 17th day of October, in the year of our Lord 1791, with solemn prayer and by the imposition of my hands, in the fear of Almighty God, I set apart Richard Pattison for the office of a deacon in the church of God, authorizing him thereby to administer the sacrament of baptism, and all such other holy duties as the said office of deacon implies ; and I do recommend him in that capacity to all those to whom these presents shall come. Given under my hand and seal, this 26th day of March, in the year 1792.

“THOMAS COKE,

“Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America.”

2. FOR A PRESBYTER.

“THESE are to certify to all whom they may concern, that I, Thomas Coke, LL.D., a bishop in the church of God, did, on the twenty-ninth day of November in the year 1813, in the fear of God, and with a single eye to His glory, by the imposition of my hands and prayer, being assisted by other ministers, set apart James Lynch for the office of an elder in the church of God ; believing him to be duly qualified for that sacred office. And I do accordingly recommend him as a fit person to administer the holy sacraments, and to feed the church of God. Given under my hand and seal, the twenty-fifth day of December, in the year above written.

“THOMAS COKE.”

Note XVIII.—Page 232.

THE self-denial of the worthy bishop reminds one of an apt illustration in an eastern poem.

“The camel through the dreary waste
Of Arab sands, with ready will,
Plods on, in long-enduring haste,
And bears his burden, patient still.

“Though gems and gold his load encloses,
Far o’er the gloomy desert borne,
Amid the beds all fill’d with roses,
He asks no guerdon but a thorn ”

Note XIX.—Page 238.

ASBURY was sometimes enabled to win to the ways of religion, by the influence of his conversation, men of the world who had never heard him preach in the pulpit. When Governor Bassett, of Delaware, was as yet a practising barrister, he sometimes visited at Judge White's. On one occasion, observing Mr. Asbury and another preacher there, he inquired of Mrs. White, "Who were those gentlemen in black?" On being informed, he betrayed his antipathy to their profession by intimating that he would not trespass on Mrs. White's hospitality that night, but would ride forward on his way. He was prevailed on, however, to abide by his original intention of resting there for the night. The barrister looked for a very dull evening with the preachers, but found, instead, so much pleasure in their conversation, that on parting he invited Mr. Asbury to visit him at his house should he come into that part of the country.

On his return home he related the circumstance to Mrs. Bassett, who was as unacquainted as he himself had been with persons of Mr. Asbury's class, and was not a little disconcerted to learn that she might expect a visit from the Methodist bishop. One day he made his appearance. Mr. and Mrs. Bassett gave him a sincere welcome, and, to render the evening as easy as possible, invited several gentlemen of cultivated and literary habits to meet him. An animated conversation was kept up till late, in which Asbury, by the sagacity, good spirit, and unobtrusive manner of his discourse, took hold of the best feelings of their hearts. They invited him to stay and preach in the town (Dover) the next evening. He did so, and for several other evenings; and Mrs. Bassett was one of the first fruits of his ministry in that place.

Note XX.—Page 249.

MR. WOOLMER, in a funeral sermon preached on the occasion of the death of Dr. Coke, makes the following reference to his own obligations, under God, to the Doctor's ministry:—"All praise be given to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, I can speak personally and feelingly of his success in the island of Barbadoes. He found

there a young man, void of understanding, carried away with the vanities of life, gay, dissipated, and often profane. Yet it pleased God, through the preaching of the word, by His servant, deeply to affect the heart and inform the judgment of this young man; and when the Doctor represented God as serious, Christ as serious, good men as serious, devils as serious, [adding,] ‘O sinners, will you trifle any more?’—he received a negative from one present. I hope without presumption I may in a great degree say, he has been faithful to his vow: and were I to address you to-night with this pointed interrogation, what answer may I expect? I can assure you now, from one-and-twenty years’ experience, I reflect on that period with inexpressible delight, and cannot meditate upon it without having my heart overwhelmed with gratitude to God.”

Note XXI.—Page 256.

DR. COKE did not wish to separate from the Church of England in the spirit of a Dissenter. We shall see how, some time after, he wished to draw the remaining bands of union between the Methodists and the Establishment yet closer. But on the other hand, doubting the possibility of this, and lamenting the uneasiness and discords which would always attend the anomalous condition of vast Societies that were neither an organic church themselves nor in strict and recognised communion with any other, he was anxious that such measures should be adopted as would place them on a truer and more scriptural basis. Having had full proof of the beneficial operation of the plans which, under Mr. Wesley’s sanction, had been carried into effect in America, he wished to see the day when similar provisions should be made in England, and the entire Methodist communion throughout the world be endowed with a ministry in constitutional form, as well as spirit, apostolically ordered and sure. In these wishes the most eminent preachers of the body participated with himself. Mr. Pawson, in a letter to Mr. Atmore in 1793, expresses his own sentiments in these unequivocal words:—“It will by no means answer our ends to dispute with one another as to which is the most scriptural form of church-government. We should consider our present circumstances, and endeavour to agree upon some method by which our

people may have the ordinances of God, and at the same time be preserved from division. I care not a rush whether it be Episcopal or Presbyterian.....I believe neither of them to be purely scriptural; but our preachers and people in general are prejudiced against the latter: consequently, if the former will answer our end, we ought to embrace it. Indeed, I believe it will suit our present plan far better than the other. The design of Mr. Wesley will weigh much with many, which now evidently appears to have been this:—He foresaw that the Methodists would, after his death, soon become a distinct people. He was deeply prejudiced against a Presbyterian, and was as much in favour of an Episcopal, form of government. In order, therefore, to preserve all that was valuable in the Church of England among the Methodists, he ordained Mr. Mather and Dr. Coke bishops. These he undoubtedly designed should ordain others. Mr. Mather told us so at the Manchester Conference, but we did not then understand him. I see no way of coming to any good settlement but on the plan I mentioned before. I sincerely wish that Dr. Coke and Mr. Mather may be allowed to be what they are, bishops; that they ordain two others, chosen by the Conference; that these four have the government of the Connexion placed in their hands for one year, each superintending his respective district,—being stationed in London, Bristol, Leeds, and Newcastle. We can give what degree of power we please; but I would not cramp them. If any should abuse the power given, woe be to them: they would not be intrusted with it again! And even supposing these four had authority to station the preachers, who would have any cause to fear? We must have ordination among us, at any rate.”

Some months after this was written seven of the preachers—Messrs. Mather, Taylor, Pawson, Bradburn, Rogers, Henry Moore, and Adam Clarke—met Dr. Coke in the city of Lichfield, and drew up a plan upon which the Connexion might be consolidated as a Methodist Episcopal Church. The Bishops proposed were Coke, Mather, Pawson, Taylor, Moore, Hanby, and Bradburn. Adam Clarke, who acted as secretary, has left in his own handwriting the minutes of the transactions, which may be seen in his Memoirs. The notes terminate with the resolution, “That the

whole of the above plan be laid before the ensuing Conference, to be adopted or rejected, as they think proper; but those present agree to recommend and support it as a thing greatly wanted, and likely to be of much advantage to the work of God." The Conference declined to adopt the measures so proposed. Some thought that the distinctions aimed at would be invidious. They forgot that the apostles had recognised such distinctions as being the ordinances of the Lord. (Eph. iv. 11; 1 Cor. xii. 29; 1 Tim. iii. 13.)

Note XXII.—Pages 315, 331.

AT the Conference of 1804 the Committee for the Management of the Methodist Foreign Missions received a more complete organization; Dr. Coke, "the General Superintendent of all the Missions," being appointed its president. This arrangement, however, involved the action of two co-ordinate authorities,—the Doctor's on the one hand, the originator and prime agent of the missions, and that of the committee on the other. Some little difficulty arose at first in adjusting the prerogative of the committee, as a directing body, with that of Dr. Coke as the general superintendent. Among a large mass of correspondence, to which I have had access through the kindness of the Rev. Dr. Hoole, there are several letters which bear on this problem. Thus, from Raithby Hall, September 7th, 1804, he writes to the committee:—

"VERY DEAR FRIENDS AND BRETHREN,

"I RECEIVED your official letter on Thursday evening, but too late to answer it by the following post: and there is no post to London on Friday evenings. Perhaps it was very well, as I had thereby two days and nights to weigh the subject.

"I do assure you I am thankful to God that I have a committee of finance and advice to assist me in the missions. I am growing old, and cannot live long; and there is some degree of uncertainty respecting my engagements in America. Consequently, that my brethren should be led of God into the proper missionary spirit, is very desirable.

"I do believe that you and I shall act in perfect harmony after explanations of our views, unless, perhaps, you may be under a

temptation to sacrifice the work in a degree, unintentionally, to a plan of economy; which in general, even with respect to missions, is excellent; and it may be that your very frugal spirit may be necessary to check my too ardent zeal.

"You observe in your letter, 'The brethren do not wish to clog the wheels of the missions, but to co-operate with Dr. Coke to promote them to the utmost.' Methinks I would not take ten thousand pounds for that sentence. I bless God and thank you for it. We shall go hand in hand together; and neither you nor I would divide the child, if it were to save our lives.

"I agree, then, that all official letters, not only concerning financial but spiritual matters, shall be at all times directed to the secretary of the committee; and that the missionaries shall be informed of it. Only let them be informed that they may correspond with me as (shall I say?) their friend and father, in the most friendly and familiar manner. If this be not the case, I shall consider myself as entirely laid aside. But I beg your pardon that I have suffered these last words to drop from my pen, as I am fully satisfied with your determination."

"RAITHBY HALL, *September 9th*, 1804.

"I FEEL myself constrained to sit down again and send you another answer. Indeed, my health, my life, if they may be so preserved, call me to it. Your letter has already robbed me of three nights' sleep; and if things go on in their present train, you will probably not be troubled with me much longer.....I wrote with fervour of affection, but not with recollection or coolness of judgment; and whatever I advanced in that letter, which implied a renunciation of my superintendency of the missions, I did not design in that sense, and most solemnly recall.

"When it was proposed that the lay-gentlemen, with the preachers in London and myself, should be the missionary committee in the interval of the Conference, I objected to it for the following reasons:—1. Because those gentlemen, with all that honour and candour which they truly possessed, informed me that, if they were a committee at all, all official correspondence must come to them solely through their secretary. 2. That every-

thing, at all times, should be finally determined by a vote of the committee. 3. Because that in this case I should of course be laid aside as the superintendent of the missions; that the word 'superintendent' would be a mere delusive name; and that God Himself had made me the instrumental father of the missions, so that I could not give them up, unless removed by death or in the providence of God, or compelled to give them up by the Conference. That in the last case I should consider myself as having nothing more to do in England.

"I had full confidence in the committee that they would act as a financial and advising committee, and not a committee of control or superintendency."

From another letter, next day:—"Cast your eye on the Minutes. You there see me appointed, as usual, superintendent of the missions. But I must be a fool not to see that your plan entirely annihilates my superintendency, and makes me a mere shadow."

These earnest reclamations succeeded in inducing the committee to revise their programme; and a new plan of action, more satisfactory to the Doctor's feelings, was agreed to, in the following resolutions:—"1. That all official letters concerning the missions should be directed to the Rev. Dr. Coke, or, in his absence, to the secretary of the committee. 2. That no letters should be considered as official but those which came in that manner. 3. That Dr. Coke, or the secretary, should lay all such letters before the committee. 4. That if the Doctor be absent from London, the official letters which arrive and are laid before the committee should, when notes had been taken of them, be forwarded to Dr. Coke, and by him returned. 5. That no step relating to the missions be taken either by Dr. Coke or the committee, but by the mutual consent of both parties. 6. That these resolutions shall not be considered as restraining either Dr. Coke or any member of the committee from friendly correspondence with the missionaries. 7. That no moneys shall be paid on any account whatever, but by the treasurer; and that the treasurer shall not pay any moneys without the consent of the committee."

All this met Dr. Coke's entire concurrence. He writes on the

18th of September, from Raithby Hall: "I am to preach two or three times to-day, and to travel about twenty miles, and am just going to set off. Please to give my love to the brethren, and tell them that they have made my mind perfectly easy."

In the voluminous correspondence between him and the committee which is still extant, as from time to time he wrote to them on the details of the missions, he seems to be for ever on the stretch in promoting this great object of his life. To the missionaries themselves he appears indeed as "a father and a friend;" and that, not only in his personal communications with them, but with the committee about them. His own acquaintance with many of the localities where they were labouring, and with the trials to which they were exposed, enabled him to enter into their circumstances with peculiar advantage. If one or another among them were betrayed into some inadvertence, in Dr. Coke was found a kind intercessor or a considerate judge. His care for their personal welfare extended not only to their mental cultivation, but to their bodily wants as well. *Ex. gr.*:—

"NEAR BOLTON, *May 21st*, 1810.

"TO THE REV. ROBERT JOHNSON,

"I REQUEST that the committee will provide brother Ward with a large quantity of flannel and fleece-hosiery. If we do not, we may be, unintentionally, the cause of his death; for he is going to a part of Newfoundland which is most exquisitely cold. Be pleased also, dear friend, to let him have very warm stockings, and very warm clothes of every kind. He is desirous of having a complete set of my Commentary. I feel a delicacy in recommending it in general; but, as he repeatedly mentioned it to me, I beg that he may have it.

"If you send a very large roll of flannel as a present to the three other preachers, you will do very well; and if you add a piece of warm broad cloth, sufficient to make each of them a suit of clothes, you will do well.....I'll not slacken my hands in begging.....Let us go on, and God will bless and protect us."

The letters following show with what effect he fulfilled his

promise to be not slack in begging. Most of them were accompanied by remittances, and from time to time with lists of the subscribers. We give some examples.

“BOSTON, *September 26th*, 1804.

“TO THE REV. R. LOMAS.

“ENCLOSED I send you £23. 10s., to make a beginning. You need not acknowledge it till I send you more next week. I will not send you such small sums again. Pray do secure the bills, I entreat you by the blood of Christ. God bless you. Please to tell the committee to write kindly to Mr. Shipley.”

“HULL, *October 2d*, 1804.

“ENCLOSED I send you £100. You must not expect another £100 till the week after next. I have borrowed above £30 of this. Accept my bill for £100. I am going on very well. The Lord gives me favour in the sight of the people. I'll send you or Mr. Entwisle a list of the subscribers as soon as I leave Hull. Please to give my love to Mr. Benson, and tell him the reason why I have not answered his exceedingly kind letter is, that I want to write him a long one.”

“O! go on. I will beg hard for you, as far as is necessary. I will, if necessary, God willing, raise for you £1,500 the ensuing year.”

“ENCLOSED I send you £27. At Hull the sum exceeds £200. I hope to be able to get in Bristol as much as at Hull.....Brother Shipley has done more in the way and spirit of martyrdom than, perhaps, any other man in the Connexion would have done. He nursed that blessed work in Dominica till the Society sprang up from 50 to 1,005. To do this, he endured the yellow fever four times, and his wife twice. When he was on the point of dying, his physicians urged him to set off instantly with the fleet to his native country, or he must die quickly. He went off, instead of going to Nova-Scotia. Very probably you would have done the same. We have no right to punish him. Do

let him go to Nova-Scotia. He may then go, when perfectly recovered, back to the dear Negroes.—P.S. Enclosed I send you £20 more. I will do all I can. In return you must all pray for me.”

“WAKEFIELD, *January 1st*, 1810.

“IF my accounts be accurate, I have sent you £784. 13s. since the Conference. I have no doubt but I shall make up this sum £2,000 before the Conference, if it please God that I live and am well. Then you will have the public collections throughout the kingdom; so that we should not impede this glorious work in the least degree. JEHOVAH JIREH.”

“TRURO, *January 28th*, 1812.

“I HAVE sent by this post £200, which will be £500 in all; and hope to send £200 more from Plymouth. I intend to be, *D. V.*, at Penzance next Sunday, at Redruth the Sunday following, and at Plymouth the Sunday after. I am preparing a French sermon to preach to the prisoners. But nothing shall interrupt my labours in begging. When I received Mr. Blanshard’s last letter, informing me that the fund was above £4,000 in debt, it robbed me of my rest for two nights. And I could not pacify myself till I had resolved to sacrifice all my literary labours, and to be nothing but a preacher and a beggar; and to beg morning and afternoon. I felt the sacrifice very great, because I am so foolish as to think I could do some good through the press. But all is over. The history of the Bible is over. I must return the money back to the subscribers for about half a quarto volume. The third volume of the West Indies must remain till after Conference. The Cottager’s Bible, possibly, I may go on with. The statement of facts concerning the West Indies must remain over. My late dear wife’s journals must remain over. I will never rest till I have liquidated all your debt.”

Note XXIII.—Page 347.

MISSION TO THE FRENCH PRISONERS.

“NORWICH, *June 20th*, 1811.

“THERE are now, I suppose, 60,000 French prisoners in England. Brother Toase is remarkably useful among many of

them. Should he not be set at liberty to devote himself to their salvation here and there? I could find a most excellent Frenchman, a most devout and able man, a local preacher, but married, in Jersey, to join him, and could easily raise money enough for their support in a separate way; that is, distinctly from our fund. What a glorious thing it would be thus to send religion into France! It is our only way at present. Lord Liverpool, I am sure, would grant us power to visit all the French prisons."

"BIRMINGHAM, *December 26th*, 1811.

"IN respect to the French missions....I have, in effect, remitted to Mr. Blanshard one thousand pounds.....The Conference passed a unanimous vote that I should take two French preachers from the Norman Isles, to be added to Mr. Toase in that very great work. I asked Dr. Clarke, who had laboured in the isles, to recommend one. He recommended Mr. Olivier. I then asked the advice of Mr. Toase and Mr. Kerpezdron in respect to Mr. Olivier, and they recommended him as the most proper person in all the isles. I expect him soon, to labour not on the Medway, but at Plymouth and Dartmoor. The depôts are so large that one missionary can do great things there. This great field is before us."

"SCARBORO', *September 3d*, 1812.

"THIS morning I received a letter from the Transport Board, informing me that they had written to their agents to open all the depôts and prison-ships for the admission of the preachers appointed by our Annual Conference. It would be a great pity if any obstruction was thrown in the way. I feel most exquisitely for this work because 'now is the accepted time.' Please to show this to the committee, and tell Mr. Blanshard that I intend to send him £200 more in a few days.

"*To the Rev. Robert Smith.*"

Note XXIV.—Page 358.

LORD SIDMOUTH'S BILL.—Dr. Coke had a persuasion that his lordship himself was not moved by any inimical feeling to the Methodist ministry. In a letter dated "Redruth, February 13th, 1812," he observes:—"I shall not be surprised if Lord Sidmouth

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